AUSTRALIA v JAPAN WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE 2009 MCG

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AUSTRALIA

The road to SOUTH AFRICA
10 key moments to qualification

World Cup Bid

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AUSTRALIA

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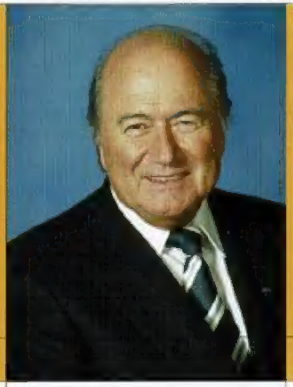

FIFA President Joseph S. Blatter

Welcome to the final round of the Asian qualifiers for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the AFC for its organisation of the matches, but also to the authorities, sponsors, numerous volunteers and fans who are supporting these qualifiers, which are very important throughout Asia.

As you can see, Asian football has progressed rapidly in the last few years. I congratulate the teams that have qualified for the final round. I hope that they play their best football and uphold the spirit of fair play while aiming to qualify for the much-coveted FIFA World Cup.

Every team wants to win on the pitch, qualify and grab their ticket for South Africa. However, the most important thing is to give your all.

I kindly ask all sportsmen, officials and fans to remember that promoting sportsmanship is synonymous with promoting ethical values, and in this respect, every player, every referee and every fan can lead by example.

Players and supporters, play to win and enjoy yourselves, but accept defeat with dignity – that is the lesson football teaches us every single day. To respect the laws of the game, your opponents, team members, referees and spectators is to respect yourself.

The winners of this final round will have every reason to celebrate, as they will be taking part in an absolutely exceptional World Cup. South African hearts and minds are full of excited anticipation ahead of football's greatest tournament and we can sense the immense enthusiasm across the entire nation whenever conversation invariably turns to the FIFA World Cup.

We are convinced that the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ will be a tournament the likes of which the world has never seen before and we are looking forward to working together with you to achieve this goal.

For the Game. For the World.

Joseph S. Blatter
FIFA PRESIDENT

> "South African hearts and minds are full of excited anticipation ahead of football's greatest tournament"

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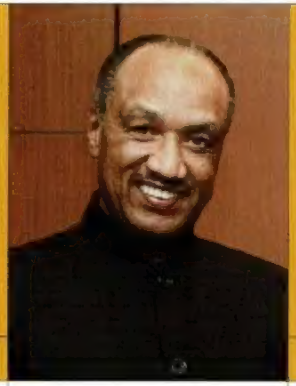
Congratulations Australia



AFC President Mohamed bin Hammam

Firstly, I offer my heartfelt congratulations to Australia for their outstanding performances on the way to qualifying for their third FIFA World Cup and second in succession.

It's also a personal delight for me to see Australia progress to the world's biggest footballing event for the first time as a member of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

Australia has been a proud addition to the AFC family since 2006 and the professionalism that the Football Federation of Australia and the players have shown in their FIFA World Cup qualifying campaign has been exemplary.

The fight for the AFC's four automatic spots at South Africa 2010 has been thrilling, while the pursuit of play-off places has meant that the competition in this fourth qualifying round will remain intense through to the last matches.

As ever, I would like to ask every player, official and referee to show respect to each other at all times because fair play is the only way a football competition can truly become extraordinary.

Teams should also keep in mind the importance of sportsmanship, which will help them stand out, even in defeat.

I would like to remind all the teams that football is not just about winning or losing but about enjoying the beautiful game, as it could well be the dawn of a new era for Asian football.

I wish you a very successful tournament and hope to see you participating again in future competitions.

The Future is Asia.

Mohamed bin Hammam
AFC PRESIDENT

> "It's a personal delight for me to see Australia progress to the world's biggest footballing event for the first time as a member of the AFC"

AFC
The Future is Asia

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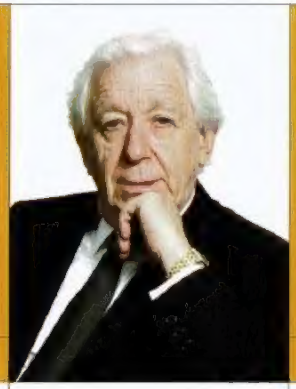
Welcome Japan

FFA Chairman Frank Lowy AC



For Australia and Japan, the journey to the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa is complete.

We have both qualified, regardless of the outcome of tonight's game but I do not think this will make it less competitive. Our two countries have a strong and respectful rivalry on the field which is developing into one of the most attractive match-ups in the Asian Football Confederation.

I would like to congratulate the Japan Football Association for qualifying for next year's FIFA World Cup. We look forward to representing Asia together in South Africa next year.

I also want to thank the football fans of Melbourne for your wonderful and continuing commitment and support for the Socceroos and for football. Thank you also to all our partners for their support, including for tonight's game.

The past ten days have been big for football. As well as qualification being secured with the draw against Qatar, we had another match last week against Bahrain, we held the inaugural Australian Football Awards (which were a wonderful opportunity to bring the football family together) and we launched our bid for the 2018-2022 FIFA World Cup.

I hope, by now, you have all had an opportunity to visit the bid website and to see our promotional film to showcase our bid to the world. If you haven't, the film will be shown at the match tonight.

I said at the launch that the FIFA World Cup here in Australia is my dream - a dream that I believe is shared by many, particularly those at the game tonight.

It is achievable; it is realistic.

For us, the secret weapon of our bid is not celebrities or football superstars or the American President... but anyone who plays, anyone who loves the game, anyone who just loves sport, every proud Australian whether at home or abroad.

It is Australia's bid. And the bid is for Australia.

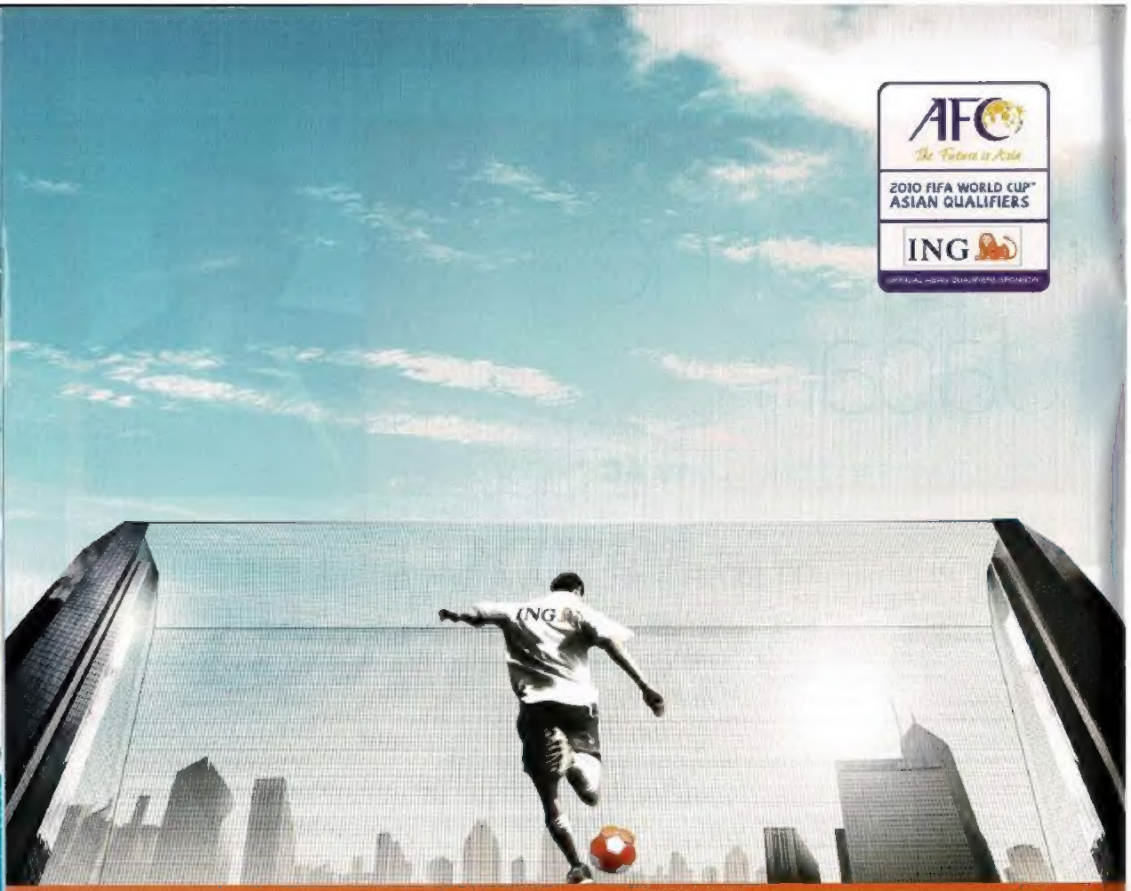
I hope your commitment and passion for football extends to join the bid. Please visit www.australia2018-2022.com.au to show your support and invite the world to 'Come Play' in Australia!

My best wishes to both teams for a very enjoyable and competitive match tonight.

Frank Lowy AC
CHAIRMAN
FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

> "Our two countries have a strong and respectful rivalry on the field"

FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA



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We're backing the bid

Victorian Premier John Brumby

It gives me great pleasure to welcome football players, officials and fans to Melbourne, the sporting events capital, for this all-important clash between the two top teams in the Asian Football Confederation, Australia and Japan.

There is no better place than the spectacular MCG to host the last match of Australia's 2010 FIFA World Cup final round of qualification. Our passionate Socceroos fans are out in force to celebrate the national team's qualification for a third FIFA World Cup, in South Africa next year.

Buoyed by the success this year of Melbourne Victory in the A-League, and the recent FIFA World Cup qualifying performances by the Socceroos, football continues to enjoy strong support from the Victorian Government and the community.

There are even more exciting times ahead – our soon-to-be completed Melbourne Rectangular Stadium will be an iconic focal point for national and international football.

The Victorian Government is pleased to support Football Federation Australia's bid to host the 2018 or 2022 FIFA World Cup Final in Australia. I urge all Australians to get behind the bid.

There is little wonder that Victorians are passionate about sport and major events. Just days after the Australia versus Japan match, the Wallabies will take on Italy in a Rugby Union test match at the Docklands.

This month also sees the return of the successful Melbourne Winter Masterpieces series with the Dali exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria and the Pompeii exhibition at the Melbourne Museum. Melbourne also welcomes the Australian premiere of the hit musical *Jersey Boys*, opening at the Princess Theatre on July 4.

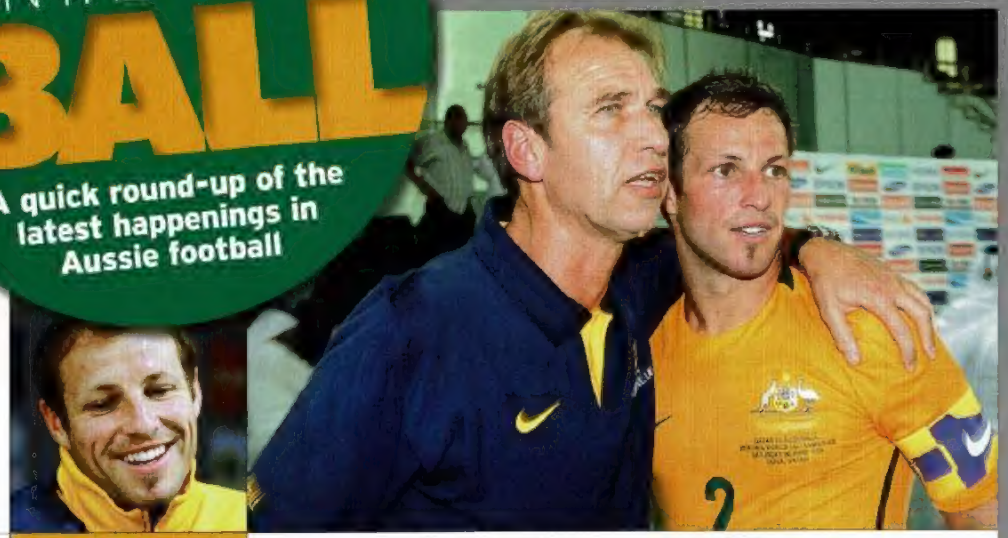
On behalf of the Victorian Government, I wish everyone a memorable stay in the world's sporting events capital and I hope you enjoy what promises to be another epic contest between Australia and Japan.

Hon John Brumby MP
PREMIER OF VICTORIA

> "The Victorian Government is pleased to support FFA's bid to host the 2018 or 2022 FIFA World Cup Finals"

ON THE BALL

A quick round-up of the latest happenings in Aussie football



CAPTAIN LUCAS' PRIDE

Socceroo captain Lucas Neill has spoken of his pride at leading his nation to a second FIFA World Cup appearance.

"The one thing that Australia has had since we started playing football is good spirit, character and desire to want to do well for Australia," said Neill.

"What's happened recently is that we've been thrown up challenges such as arriving the day before a game and mentally we've been thrown challenges that we're not used to.

"Because of our character, because of the team that we have, we've been able to take those challenges head on and beat them.

"That's what has come out of us, we've become more resilient and with a little bit of tweaking from the management and from the coaching staff we've become a team that is not only 100% committed to their country, but they also have a little bit of nous and like to be a team that is difficult to beat."

Aussie Pim hails Socceroo team effort

Socceroo coach Pim Verbeek has once again hailed the professionalism of his players and staff in qualifying for their second successive FIFA World Cup finals appearance.

Australia qualified for the 2010 FIFA World Cup finals in South Africa after a 0-0 draw with Qatar in Doha on match day six.

"I think we are all very pleased with qualification with two games to spare," Verbeek said. "The players did a fantastic job and it was definitely not an easy qualification (process). They were very professional... not only the first eleven but all the boys involved, the coaching staff and the backroom staff.

"These are not easy trips and the people that were there in the last week know how difficult it is, so a big compliment to all of them."

Verbeek will be urging his players to celebrate their qualification by putting on a good performance for Australian fans against Japan.

"In terms of a celebration game, it means the fans can celebrate that we are there. We have to win the game; we are going to win the game, we want to win the game and we want to show that we are the No.1 team in this group.

"They know that already, but we want to show it again."

The Dutchman, who was an assistant at the two previous FIFA World Cup finals with Korea Republic, has reiterated his earlier comments that in South Africa, the aim will be to do better than 2006.

"I think we all have the same target and it's to do it better than in 2006; I don't say we are going to do it better, but that's the target, to do everything in our capacity to have better results than the last time.

"It will be a tough challenge of course, but this was a tough challenge also and we survived. I think the boys will be ready."

The Socceroos were ecstatic after qualifying for the FIFA World Cup in South Africa 2010

New National Football Curriculum unveiled

Football Federation Australia has announced another landmark initiative with the unveiling of a new National Football Curriculum (NFC) for 6-19-year-olds which aims to improve the long-term skill level, quality and performance of Australia's top players and teams.

"The National Football Curriculum is the next important stage of the Talent Identification Development Review and the National Football Development Plan," said FFA CEO, Ben Buckley.

"It sets the blueprint for the quality and style of Australian football for the future and aims to significantly improve our skill levels. It is the first time we have had a national curriculum which sets the basis for the development of all young players and coaches, whether at community or elite level.

"The key objective is to create a talented player development program that emphasises skill and sustains international success for generations to come, as well as a coach development system that produces quality coaches who are able to implement the curriculum and realise similar goals."

The NFC has been developed by researching best practice in talent development and identification in football and other sports and tailoring it to football in Australia. The evidence-based curriculum has been developed by FFA's National Technical Director, Han Berger, following on from preliminary work by the previous National Technical Director, Rob Baan.

Berger will oversee implementation of the NFC. "It recognises two streams of development. The first is for talented players who aim to play at the highest level possible, and the second is for community players who just want to play the game and enjoy the sport."

Above: Han Berger, FFA National Technical Director

KEY POINTS OF THE NFC

- **The approach is "game-related" rather than "isolated"**, which impacts all training and exercises with an emphasis on skill development and a pro-active style of playing that corresponds with the Australian competitive psyche and mandating of the 1-4-3-3 formation for all FFA controlled development teams (such as Joeys, Young Matildas) as the best developmental model.
- **Integration and mutual dependency of physical conditioning** with football training so that they are not separated.
- **Each State/Territory will appoint a Technical Director**, funded under the FFA's new Member Federation Charter, with the State Technical Director reporting to the National Technical Director.
- **Coach Education Programs will be reviewed** to reflect the NFC.
- **Specific levels of coaching qualification will be required** for all higher level coaching positions (National Team, A-League, W-League, National Youth League, Institute and State technical Directors).
- **By 2010 each State/Territory will need to appoint at least one 'Skill Acquisition Trainer'** whose role will be to ensure that skill development programs for talented players are universally implemented.
- **Football clubs, schools and academies will be accredited and rated.** Adoption of the Curriculum will be a prerequisite to accreditation and rating.

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Men's Health Week

MEN'S HEALTH WEEK09

Mark your diaries for Men's Health Week 09, a week-long reminder dedicated to raising awareness of men's health issues.

Held from June 15 to 21, Men's Health Week celebrates the contribution men make to their family, work and the community and reminds us that men don't need to 'tough it out' or 'go it alone'.

The week is focused on preventative health and healthy behaviours that can be adopted in relation to physical, mental health and sexual health and function. Men are urged to visit their GP to prevent illness.

Did you know that men have a higher death rate than women from cancer, heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, accidents and suicide and are dying about five years younger than women?

Something as simple as a check-up could save a man's life. Men's Health Week will also introduce an informative program called The M5 Project - an initiative that addresses the fact that five Australian men die every hour from a preventable illness.

The M5 Project's five key reminders to a healthier life are sharing your family's health history with your GP; knowing your healthy weight; regular blood pressure tests; stopping smoking and maintaining a healthy mind and body.

Events will be held nationwide. Check out Men's Health Week online at www.menshealthweek.com.au.

Melbourne Victory has launched its memberships for the new season, with some exciting additions making now a great time to join. The reigning A-League champions will host an additional three home matches in 2009/10, with renewing adult members paying only an extra $10 for a game-day adult membership, which provides a 30% discount for a 14-game package and includes blockbusters against Sydney and Adelaide. Visit www.mvfc.com.au for more information.

MELBOURNE Victory FC

FFA AND UNICEF TEAM UP

Football fans like you are making a real difference. $1 from every ticket sold for this match will be donated to UNICEF, Football Federation Australia's official partner supporting children in need.

In 2009, funds raised through the UNICEF/FFA partnership to 'Level the Playing Field' will be used by UNICEF to promote healthy living for children in West Africa, where war and poverty has affected health and education systems. By harnessing the popularity of football, UNICEF reaches Africa's young people with vital messages about HIV and AIDS and uses sport-based programs to instill important life-skills.

To learn about the UNICEF/FFA 'Level the Playing Field' partnership, head to www.unicef.org.au for more information.

unicef

MEN'S HEALTH WEEK09

IS PART OF THE M5 PROJECT

June 15th-21st 2009

5 men die every hour in Australia from potentially preventable illnesses.

This has to stop!

www.menshealthweek.com.au

THE M5 PROJECT · BAYER · Men's Health

ROUND FOUR

THE STORY SO FAR...

It's been an exciting campaign in both AFC groups as we head into the last stages of qualification for the FIFA World Cup WORDS Aidan Ormond

GROUP A

RESULTS TO DATE

MATCH DAY 1
BAHRAIN 2 – JAPAN 3
QATAR 3 – UZBEKISTAN 0

MATCH DAY 2
UZBEKISTAN 0 – AUSTRALIA 1
QATAR 1 – BAHRAIN 1

MATCH DAY 3
AUSTRALIA 4 – QATAR 0
JAPAN 1 – UZBEKISTAN 1

MATCH DAY 4
QATAR 0 – JAPAN 3
BAHRAIN 0 – AUSTRALIA 1

MATCH DAY 5
UZBEKISTAN 0 – BAHRAIN 1
JAPAN 0 – AUSTRALIA 0

MATCH DAY 6
JAPAN 1 – BAHRAIN 0
UZBEKISTAN 4 – QATAR 0

MATCH DAY 7
BAHRAIN 1 – QATAR 0
AUSTRALIA 2 – UZBEKISTAN 0

MATCH DAY 8
QATAR 0 – AUSTRALIA 0
UZBEKISTAN 0 – JAPAN 1

MATCH DAY 9
AUSTRALIA –
BAHRAIN –
JAPAN –
QATAR –

*Played June 10: Fill in results

AUSTRALIA

Australia qualified for the FIFA World Cup 2010 on match day eight courtesy of a 0-0 draw with Qatar in Doha.

Australia booked their ticket as one of the top two in the group, accumulating points with machine-like efficiency over the course of the group campaign.

It began with a 1-0 win in Tashkent, a 4-0 victory over Qatar in Brisbane and a get-out-of-jail 1-0 triumph in Manama.

The 0-0 draw in Yokohama last February was a vital result which said much about Australia's strength in the group and that was backed up by a 2-0 home victory over Uzbekistan.

Six clean sheets from six games; eight goals and 14 points was enough in the end for the Socceroos who've qualified for the first time through the AFC route.

JAPAN

Like Australia, the Japanese qualified with games to spare. Their "Doha" was in Tashkent also on June 6 when they defeated the dangerous Uzbeks 1-0 to ensure an automatic top-two spot.

In March, Japan squeezed past Bahrain 1-0 in Saitama thanks to a flash of Shunsuke Nakamura trickery.

The three points kept the chasing pack at bay and Japan firmly in the group's top two.

However, it hasn't been a fully convincing campaign. Earlier, they'd failed to defeat the Socceroos at home (0-0) and drew in Saitama 1-1 with Uzbekistan. But earlier wins over Qatar (3-0) and Bahrain (3-2) put them in good stead for their successful run.

BAHRAIN

The Reds took three crucial points against Qatar on April 1. The 1-0 win courtesy of Faouzi Aaish's strike cemented Al-Ahmar's spot as third in the group on seven points.

Days earlier, Bahrain left Japan on the wrong end of a 1-0 loss so the win was crucial in keeping up their chances of finishing third and a third-place play-off with Group B. Bahrain's best result was in February with a stunning 1-0 win in Tashkent. A 94th-minute winner handing them the three points.

Uzbekistan's star midfielder Server Djeparov

QATAR

The Maroons needed three points against the Aussies on June 6. They only got a point, meaning their top three hopes hung by a thread. A disastrous last two match days in March and April consigned Bruno Metsu's side to bottom place and just four points. A thumping 4-0 loss to Uzbekistan on March 28 was followed by a defeat to neighbours Bahrain on April 1.

The Qataris had got off to a flyer in 2008 with a 3-0 win over Uzbekistan in Doha and a draw at home with Bahrain. However, since then, it's all gone pear-shaped for the middle east nation.

UZBEKISTAN

The match day six loss to Japan was a huge blow to the Uzbeks' chances of finishing third in the group. Hopes were raised briefly on March 28 when Farhod Tadjiev nabbed a hat-trick in a 4-0 demolition of Qatar in Tashkent on match day six.

But the loss to Australia a few days later on the back of a heart-breaking home loss to Bahrain in February effectively dashed their top two aspirations.

STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
AUSTRALIA	6	4	2	0	8	0	8	14
JAPAN	6	4	2	0	9	3	6	14
BAHRAIN	6	2	1	3	5	6	-1	7
QATAR	7	1	2	4	4	13	-9	5
UZBEKISTAN	7	1	1	5	5	9	-4	4

*As at June 10, 2009

Qatar's Sebastian Quintana

GROUP B

RESULTS TO DATE

MATCH DAY 1
SAUDI ARABIA 1 – IRAN 1
UAE 1 – DPR KOREA 2

MATCH DAY 2
DPR KOREA 1 – KOREA REP 1
UAE 1 – SAUDI ARABIA 2

MATCH DAY 3
KOREA REP 4 – UAE 1
IRAN 2 – DPR KOREA 1

MATCH DAY 4
UAE 1 – IRAN 1
SAUDI ARABIA 0 – KOREA REP 2

MATCH DAY 5
DPR KOREA 1 – SAUDI ARABIA 0
IRAN 1 – KOREA REP 1

MATCH DAY 6
IRAN 1 – SAUDI ARABIA 2
DPR KOREA 2 – UAE 0

MATCH DAY 7
KOREA REP 1 – DPR KOREA 0
SAUDI ARABIA 3 – UAE 2

MATCH DAY 8
UAE 0 – KOREA REPUBLIC 2
DPR KOREA 0 – IRAN 0

MATCH DAY 9
IRAN –
UAE –
KOREA REP –
SAUDI ARABIA –

*Played June 10: Fill in the results

KOREA REPUBLIC

As expected, the Korea Republic became the third AFC nation to qualify for the FIFA World Cup after defeating bottom side UAE 2-0 on match day eight.

Earlier, in a highly anticipated clash, Korea Republic defeated DPR Korea 1-0 in Seoul on April 1 to maintain their slender lead at the top of the group.

They drew with DPR Korea in neutral Shanghai 1-1 to kick off their campaign before slamming UAE 4-1 in Seoul. A 2-0 win away to Saudi Arabia and a 1-1 result in Tehran last February rounds out a strong campaign.

DPR KOREA

It's been a surprisingly good campaign for DPR Korea. A 0-0 draw with Iran on June 6 kept the chasing pack at bay. However, the 1-0 loss in Seoul last April was a setback coming on the back of a comfortable 2-0 win over UAE in Pyongyang on March 28.

Starting the group with a confidence-building three points in the UAE and a draw in neutral Shanghai against Korea Republic, DPR Korea's only other loss came in Iran with a 2-1 reversal.

A 1-0 win against Saudi Arabia on match day five was vital in keeping the Saudis at bay.

Park Chu-Young is a key man for Korea Republic

SAUDI ARABIA

Despite a bye on match day eight, the Saudis look like they're coming home with a wet sail after excellent match days six and seven. A stunning 2-1 victory in Iran on March 28 was backed up by three points over UAE at home days later. Six points from two games and suddenly the "Sons of the Desert" – accustomed to qualifying for FIFA World Cups – were breathing down the necks of DPR Korea. After a disappointing campaign up until March with just one win to their names, the Saudis have made a late charge.

IRAN

Iran really needed the three points in DPR Korea on June 6 to ignite their chances. They only got a 0-0 draw. To be fair, it's been a chaotic campaign for this regional heavyweight. A lack of continuity under three different coaches has been reflected in the indifferent results.

Iran's only victory was a 2-1 home win over DPR Korea but the loss to the Saudis at home on March 28 was a real low-point. The defeat resulted in the departure of coach and former playing great Ali Daei.

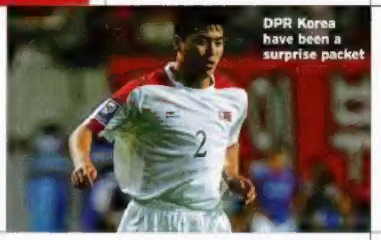
UAE

It's been an awful campaign for UAE. With just one point from seven games they can't even finish third. Losses to Saudi Arabia (3-2) and DPR Korea (2-0) on match days six and seven crushed any lingering hopes. Match day eight's 2-0 home loss to group leaders Korea Republic just another blow to a side that's been hugely disappointing.

STANDINGS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
KOREA REPUBLIC	6	4	2	0	11	3	8	14
DPR KOREA	7	3	2	2	7	5	2	11
SAUDI ARABIA	6	3	1	2	8	8	0	10
IRAN	6	1	4	1	6	6	0	7
UAE	7	0	1	6	6	16	-10	1

*As at June 10, 2009



DPR Korea have been a surprise packet

Come play!

The quest to bring the greatest show on earth to Australia has begun

INTERVIEW Aidan Ormond

AUSTRALIANS HAVE LONG BEEN SPELLBOUND BY THE FIFA WORLD CUP. Transfixed in front of TV screens at all hours, listening intently to radios, logging on to websites or joining the throngs at the events held across the world, it's been a passion as much in Australia as the rest of the world.

Take the last FIFA World Cup in 2006. Who could forget those scenes as fans of all ages rose in the middle of the night and in the middle of a chilly winter to pack out live sites across the country?

And previous editions have also been huge events even if our beloved Socceroos weren't playing. It's shown how much passion there really is for an event that galvanises the world for four magical weeks every four years.

And now, for the first time, Australia is bidding to host the event for either 2018 or 2022. It sends a chill just thinking about it, doesn't it?

The FIFA Executive Committee, meeting in Tokyo last December, agreed that bidding nations could submit applications for either or both tournaments. And as you'd expect, Australia is not alone in hoping to host ether FIFA World Cup.

Dare we dream? Yes, says FFA. And they're going to do everything in their power to make that dream a reality for Australia and this sports-mad nation.

Let's wish the FFA the best of luck as they seek to make Australian sports history. We spoke with FFA CEO Ben Buckley about the bid.

"We believe it's a 'next step' for us in demonstrating our standing as a football nation and as a nation"

This will be a "people's bid" says Ben Buckley

Ben, why is Australia bidding for the FIFA World Cup?
We believe it's a 'next step' for us in demonstrating our standing as a football nation and as a nation. Australia already has an outstanding reputation for hosting major events, so this is the next logical major event for us. It is the greatest show on earth, and it is one that we haven't yet hosted.

What are the unique advantages Australia has in hosting the Cup?
Obviously, our track record is an advantage. We've had two Olympic Games, numerous Commonwealth Games, the Australian »

Open, Grand Prix, Indy 500, cricket and rugby world cups and World Youth Day. While we're not the only country with such a track record, ours is a particularly strong record. We're also a country that people are curious about and want to see. What better time to do it than while the FIFA World Cup is on?

What are the bid's main points in terms of how you'll sell it?

1. We love sport and football is a growing passion
2. We enjoy supporting all sport
3. We bring together two confederations - Oceania and Asia
4. We're in the Asian time zone
5. We're a very welcoming country

Who will be the faces of the bid going forward?

We have deliberately chosen not to name a series of ambassadors. The faces of our bid are, in fact, everyone who wants to see the FIFA World Cup in Australia. Obviously, Australian players are important to us and we're very happy to have celebrities on board supporting us. But the essence of our bid is that it's a 'people's movement' and we want every Australian - either at home or abroad - and all their friends and relatives from all over the world, supporting us.

How difficult will this bid process be?

It's an 18-month 'political' campaign to earn 13 votes. It may sound simple but it's not. It is truly a marathon and not a sprint and we're up against 10 other bidders with very strong credentials.

Could you explain the bid timeline?

The decision is made (for both 2018 and 2022) by the 24 members of the FIFA Executive Council in December 2010.

Before then, we submit the 'Bid Book' - a blueprint for what, how and where we would do the FIFA World Cup - in May 2010. The Bid Book must satisfy FIFA's comprehensive requirements for stadia, accommodation, transport, IT, medical services, safety and security, broadcasting, commercial rights, corporate hospitality and ticketing. Between now and December 2010, the Bid Team will be taking every opportunity possible to promote Australia's bid. »

"It's a 18-month [illegible] but it's not"

BIDDING NATIONS

ENGLAND David Beckham (left) lent his weight to the official bid launch.

INDONESIA The bid believes their millions of football fans will hold them in good stead and they say seven new stadiums and major upgrades to existing venues across will be forthcoming.

JAPAN It is believed Japan intend to use Tokyo's proposed 100,000 capacity Olympic stadium (mooted for the also yet-to-be-won 2016 Olympics) as a focal point of their bid.

QATAR The bid launch was in front of 50,000 people and if successful, would be the first global sports event held in the Middle East.

MEXICO If successful Mexico would become the first nation to host the Finals three times.

RUSSIA Current Russian national coach Guus Hiddink is rumoured to be used as a bid ambassador and around $10 billion will be pledged, they say.

KOREA REPUBLIC The 2002 hosts are aiming to win the rights for the FIFA World Cup in 2022.

UNITED STATES President Barack Obama has already written to FIFA President Sepp Blatter to signal his support.

In addition, two joint bids have been submitted although there is a belief FIFA is reluctant to entertain the idea of co-hosts. Belgium and the Netherlands as well as Portugal and Spain have teamed up for their submissions.

$5.3 BILLION BOOST TO THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY

Hosting the FIFA World Cup will bring significant economic benefit to Australia including boosting tourism, infrastructure and jobs around the country.

"In economic terms, it would mean a $5.3 billion boost to GDP," says FFA CEO Ben Buckley.

"It would result in an estimated 75,000 extra jobs, and it would bring around one million international visitors here. If you think of what the Sydney Olympic Games did for Sydney and Australia. This would be five times bigger," adds Buckley.

"At the last FIFA World Cup in Germany the largest group of television viewers was from Asia and it is a large and increasingly popular sport around the region.

"Bidding for the FIFA World Cup, and winning it, is an investment which will pay dividends for the entire nation and generations to come," adds Buckley. "While we recognise that the task ahead presents huge challenges, we are also inspired by the opportunity to promote Australia and take our nation's sporting identity to a new high."

Outcomes from the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany

- Two million international visitors
- 85,000 people employed
- More than 3.3 million spectators
- Cumulative television audience of 26 billion, broadcast in 214 countries

Otsuka

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AUSTRALIA'S FIFA WORLD CUP BID TEAM IN PLACE

Clearly, any bid requires a massive amount of work in a coordinated effort. And just as the Socceroos have a team with players in different positions, so does the FFA with its "team".

Under the Bid Process conducted by FIFA, a bidding member association has the option of establishing a separate Bid Committee with its own legal entity or a business unit within the member association.

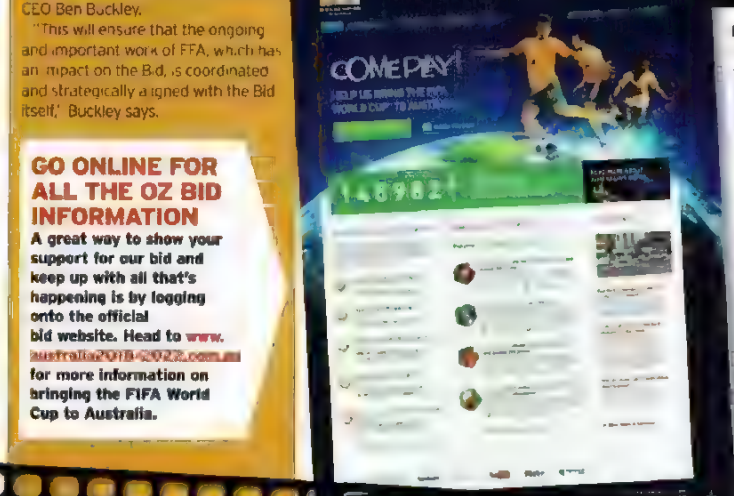
The FFA Board has opted to integrate the Bid Team and the Bid Process into the everyday business of FFA to ensure that all stakeholders in the football community are fully united behind it, with the FFA World Cup Bid Team to be chaired by FFA Chairman, Frank Lowy and led by FFA CEO Ben Buckley.

"This will ensure that the ongoing and important work of FFA, which has an impact on the Bid, is coordinated and strategically aligned with the Bid itself," Buckley says.

FFA Chairman Frank Lowy (left) and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's [illegible] in backing our bid

GO ONLINE FOR ALL THE OZ BID INFORMATION

A great way to show your support for our bid and keep up with all that's happening is by logging onto the official bid website. Head to www.australia2018-2022.com.au for more information on bringing the FIFA World Cup to Australia.



I'm guessing it's going to be pretty tricky. What could potentially work against us in this bid?

[Laughs]. Everything and nothing. As I said, it's a political campaign to earn 13 votes so we have to make key points along the way some real winners for Australia.

What would it mean for Football Federation Australia to win the hosting rights for this event?

Football brings countries together, and it would work the same for Australia as everyone was united behind putting on the best FIFA World Cup ever! There is no doubt that it would be a life-changing event for football in Australia. It would set up the sport for generations to come and take us to a whole new level as a football nation. ■

Images from the bid campaign launched by the FFA this month

The quiet achievers

Aidan Ormond looks at the past and the future of the Socceroo forward line

PAST

Paul Trimboli

[illegible] 40
[illegible]nces 46
[illegible] 1988 v Fiji
[illegible] 16
[illegible]tional honours Schoolboy, U/20, U/16
[illegible] Sunshine George Cross, South Melbourne

One of the greatest Socceroos never to have been snapped up by an overseas club, Trimboli was twice voted NSL Player of the Year and as you'd expect, was a superstar on the Australian club scene during the 1990s.

He was also a regular for the home-based Socceroo sides with 46 appearances over 13 stellar years with the national team.

What Trimboli lacked in raw pace he made up for in perception and an acute game awareness. "Trimmers", as he's known by most, could see moves two even three ahead. He was quite simply a joy to watch.

But more than that, the striker was a composed finisher and a fine example of a sportsman who was popular with more than just the adoring hordes at his long-time club South Melbourne.

The Brighton junior first lit up the international scene back in 1989. As a raw 21-year-old, he was injected into a vital game as a late substitute in a FIFA World Cup qualifier against Israel in Sydney.

With the Socceroos seemingly out of the contest at 0-1 down, Trimboli, in only his fourth national team appearance, gave the home supporters some hope with a late goal to equalise the tie at 1-1.

The two-time NSL U/21 best player did trial briefly overseas at Manchester City, but the move didn't materialise. The upside for local fans was that it gave them the chance to see his talent on a regular basis.

And Trimboli provided the Socceroos with overseas quality when called upon and continued to play for his nation up until 2002, bagging 16 goals in total, including valuable strikes against African powerhouse Ghana in 1996 and AFC nation Kuwait in 1993.

"He could see moves two even three ahead"

BRILLIANT MIND
Trimboli in action for the Socceroos during the 1990s

At club level, when he finished up with the Lakeside outfit in 2004, he had notched up 17 seasons and close to 100 goals. His golden career included winning multiple national titles and playing in the inaugural FIFA Club World Cup with South Melbourne.

At Rio's Maracana Stadium, Trimboli's class was showcased on the biggest stage against Manchester United, Vasco da Gama and Mexico's Necaxa in 2000. He did not disappoint as South enhanced their reputation with an eye-catching campaign.

These days Trimboli is a regular analyst on Fox Sports' football coverage.

FUTURE

Nathan Burns

[illegible] 21
[illegible] 2
[illegible]ebut 2007 v Singapore
[illegible]rs U/17, U/20, U/23
Clubs Adelaide United, AEK Athens

The 21-year-old's first two seasons in the A-League were a smash. Now, 12 months on and well ensconced in Athens with Greek super-club AEK, Burns has the chance to propel his career even further after debuting for their first team earlier this year.

Like Trimboli, Burns is often deployed as a "second striker" just in behind the forward line. It allows his pace and vision to come to the fore.

We saw evidence of that at Adelaide in tandem with fellow Socceroo up-and-comer Bruce Djite. The pair wreaked A-League havoc before landing overseas contracts (Djite moved to the Turkish Super League).

Some of Burns' goals with the Reds were stunning. A hat-trick against the Mariners in January 2007 was memorable, but his first goal in October 2006 is still being talked about at Hindmarsh.

Against a star-studded Sydney FC side, Burns won possession deep before laying the ball off and heading forward. After a neat inter-change of passes, Burns found the ball at his feet near the penalty box.

With Sky Blues' defenders in his way, Burns finessed his way through, evading tackles before slotting a slide-rule shot under Clint Bolton. It was judged one of the best of that season's goals.

Burns' rise can be traced back to when he was 14. He left his small country town of Blayney, near Dubbo in western NSW and moved in with a family in Sydney while he honed his skills at Parramatta Eagles. Soon after he was picked up by the Australian Institute of Sport, then Adelaide United.

After playing for Australia at U/17, U/20 and U/23 levels, Burns debuted for the Socceroos in 2007 in an AFC Asian Cup preparatory match against Singapore.

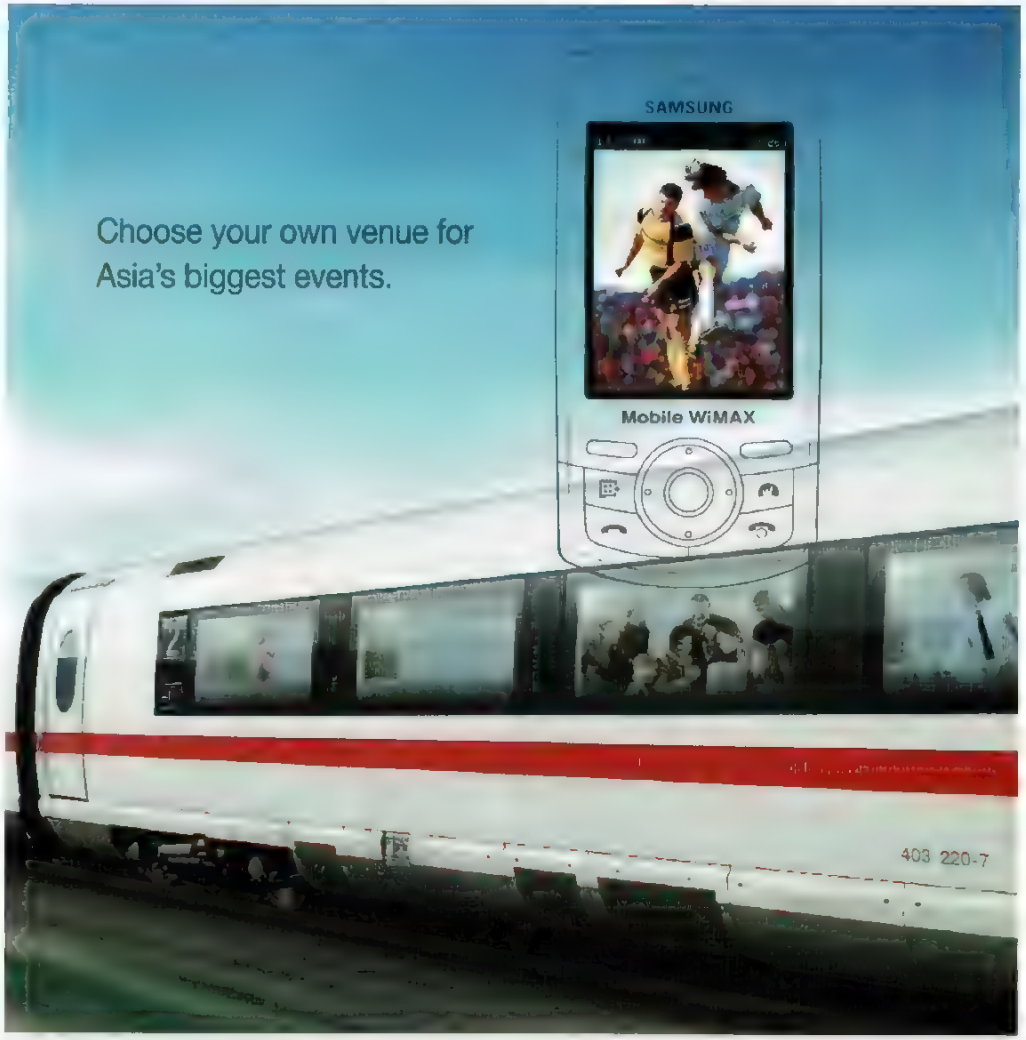
A year later and again he turned out against the tiny Asian nation in his second appearance for the national team.

"Burns is honing his skills in the Greek Super League"

After the current FIFA World Cup campaign, Burns, Djite and others are likely to feature more as the Socceroos look to the next AFC Asian Cup and the FIFA World Cup in Brazil 2014.

If Australia qualify for Brazil, Burns, at 26, will be close to his peak. In the meantime, the kid from country NSW continues his European football education in the hothouse of Greek football.

On the evidence so far, Burns is looking good to cement a regular Socceroo berth over the next few years.



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MY FIRST TIME...

Rodrigo Vargas

The Melbourne Victory defender recalls his Socceroo debut in January

Written by Aidan Ormond

THE GAME

Socceroo debut v Indonesia
Tournament AFC Asian Cup qualifier
Venue Gelora Bung Karno Stadium, Jakarta, Indonesia
Date January 28, 2009
Result Indonesia 0 Australia 0

Vargas clears the ball during his full Socceroo debut in Jakarta against Indonesia in January

"I was at a friend's birthday party when I saw the name Gary Moretti, Socceroo team manager, come up on my phone so I kinda knew what the call was about. I was a bit shocked.

Being involved in the A-League and trying to do well for a mid-week full international was quite tough but at the same time I was just rapt and honoured.

The majority of the team got to Jakarta the day before the game. The Victory players were there two days before the match. We had a light session to loosen up and one proper session the day before on the ground with the full group.

Walking out onto the ground on the night a lot of emotions were running through my head. You don't really know what to expect until you get out there on the night and walk out in the Aussie jersey.

I was fortunate enough to sit on the bench for four qualifiers which was a buzz in itself but actually walking out was a real buzz. I didn't get nervous, honestly I just was excited. And it was a massive crowd, I think around 70,000 [officially posted at 88,000]. The adrenaline was pumping and it was a massive thing for me to make my full debut.

The Socceroo squad was put together in two days really and Pim Verbeek wasn't with us on the night due to his ban. The pitch was boggy, the grass was thick and a lot of us were making our debuts. All those things were factors. Looking back at the game it probably wasn't the best spectacle but away from home it was a good result. Playing alongside Craig Moore was a fantastic learning experience, though.

Indonesia have good technical players. It's clear there are no more easy teams in world football. We knew it would be tough and their crowd was unbelievable. It made it hard to communicate with Craig and the others.

> "The main priority is not to concede a goal and that's what I helped do in my first game for the Socceroos"

Walking off the pitch we could hold our heads high that we got a result despite all those factors.

Looking back on the game I was quite happy with my performance. The main priority is not to concede and that's what I helped to do in my first international game.

I was well aware of the path I'd taken, coming from the Victorian Premier League to the A-League and the Socceroos in a short space of time I guess. I didn't think about it until after the game when you realise the achievement. And no-one can take that away from you. ■

JAPAN G'DAY BLUE

Japan have fantastic individual talent, a precise football culture and a fascinating rivalry with the Socceroos which continues tonight...

WORDS Aidan Ormond

THEY DISH UP THE BEAUTIFUL GAME with a dash of Asian spice, produce eye-catching talent and have qualified for the last three FIFA World Cups on the back of the biggest and best competition in the confederation, the J-League.

There's much to be admired about Japanese football, as Australian fans have witnessed at international level and in recent editions of the AFC Asian Champions League. Even the Japanese fans are a class above. Anyone who witnessed Urawa Red Diamonds' extraordinary supporters in Saitama and the estimated 1,100 travelling fans in Sydney during the 2007 ACL sneaked a glimpse into a supporters' culture that's got many Aussie fans drooling. And there's probably a few here tonight...

The cherry on the cake is Japan's rivalry with the Socceroos - a rivalry going back to 1956. But who can forget the two sides' 2006 FIFA World Cup group game? Or Japan's payback in the sapping heat of Hanoi in the AFC Asian Cup quarter-final a year later? And in February this year, the teams met again. In a clash of huge importance for this qualifying group, a 0-0 draw in chilly Yokohama warmed the visitors but kept both sides in pole position at the head of the group.

If Japan haven't qualified by tonight's match, most believe it's only a matter of time before it's confirmed. And most neutrals wouldn't deny they deserve their success over the last two decades.

Japan is a shining example of a football culture that's been developed with a single-minded purpose and vision. From this clarity, the blueprint has produced a generation of players with fine technique who've gone on to grace FIFA World Cups and some big European leagues, all on the back of the success of the J-League in the last two decades.

Current stars Shunsuke Nakamura, Yasuhito Endo, Keiji Tamada and Makoto Hasebe, to name just a few, are products of a decidedly technical football development culture. And who could forget the brief A-League stint of Kazuyoshi Miura? He lit up the A-League in 2005 with his class and professional attitude at Sydney FC.

The J-League kicked off in 1993 with a concerted effort made to produce players who could compete at international level at clubs which were resourced well enough to produce their own youth players in a professional environment and in keeping with a clear national football development plan. That plan placed strong emphasis on the Brazilian football culture bedded in by the importation of numerous Samba football royalty such as Zico and others. The Japanese set sail on a course that's been methodical, financially prudent and consistent in its approach.

In Australia, we witnessed the fruits of this planning during the 1990s. Just before Japan's first-ever FIFA World Cup appearance in 1998, in a friendly at Adelaide's Hindmarsh Stadium, the visitors comprehensively defeated the Socceroos 3-0. Japanese superstar Hidetoshi Nakata and a brace to Takashi Hirano were enough to suggest Japanese football was heading very much in the right direction. This wasn't a one-off, either. Two years earlier, the Japanese thumped Australia 4-1 in Wollongong. Japan, evidently, were going places and, in terms of football development, were leaving Australia behind.

The Blue Samurai's first FIFA World Cup in 1998 caught the imagination of a nation steeped in the traditions of baseball.

With Nakata in their line-up, hopes were high. That said, it was a challenging introduction, losing in their opening game to eventual quarter-finalists Argentina 1-0.

A similar loss to Croatia - a nation »

> "Japan has executed a clear vision in their football development plan"

Japan's flying defender Marcos Tulio Tanaka

Shunsuke Nakamura goes over the wall against the Socceroos in Yokohama

VITAL STATISTICS

Association Japanese Football Association

Official site [illegible]

FIFA Ranking [illegible]

AFC Ranking 2

Capital Tokyo

Population Est. [illegible]

Other cities [illegible]

Location [illegible] Peninsula

TEAM PROFILE

Japan celebrate another goal on the road to South Africa 2010.

DID YOU KNOW?

1980s Socceroo Alan Davidson has Japanese parentage. And watch out for his son Jason, 17, who was recently named in the Young Socceroos squad.

that eventually made the semi-finals of the tournament - consigned Takeshi Okada's side to an early exit. With the quality of opposition, it was certainly no disgrace.

However, Japan's final game against Jamaica was a genuine chance to grab their first win at the event. That wasn't to be, though, with the Reggae Boyz edging it 2-1. But Masashi Nakayama did have the honour of scoring Japan's historic first-ever FIFA World Cup goal in the 74th minute.

Of course, as co-hosts Japan automatically qualified for the next FIFA World Cup in 2002. And with the emotion of a home tournament and excellent preparation, the Blue Samurai eased through the group stage ending top of their group. Victory over Russia - their first win at a FIFA World Cup - was backed up with a 2-2 draw against Belgium and three points over Tunisia in a 2-0 victory.

This was the era of the wizard Shinji Ono, Koji Nakata and defender Naoki Matsuda. And with stalwart Hidetoshi Nakata still doing his thing, the home boys looked unstoppable. But in the round of 16, the fabulous Turks hit them with an Umit Davala sucker-punch. The Japanese dream was over courtesy of a crushing 0-1 loss in Miyagi.

After victory in the 2004 AFC Asian Cup, expectations were again high heading into the 2006 FIFA World Cup.

The squad was led by today's heroes Shunsuke Nakamura, Yuji Nakazawa and the perennial favourite Hidetoshi Nakata, not to mention Zico who was now in the dugout.

But in a hammer blow, the super-fit Socceroos famously came back from a disputed Nakamura set-piece to take the points 3-1 in the group opener. From that point on, it was always going to be difficult for Japan to qualify for the knockout round. A gritty 0-0 draw with Croatia left the Japanese with the mountainous task of defeating the Brazilians in game three. Despite Keiji Tamada opening the scoring, Brazil stormed back to win 4-1 and ensure Japan once again left frustrated at a European-based FIFA World Cup.

If Japan qualify for South Africa 2010 much depends on the draw, but if they do make it, the bitterness of Germany 2006 and France 1998 will be a powerful motivator you'd think.

Underpinning this surge in Japanese football on the international stage over the last two decades has been the roaring success of the J-League. Following on from the JSL (Japanese Soccer League), the competition has been a shining example of how to build a strong, viable domestic league in a wholly professional environment.

With strong corporate support (largely from Japan's then-booming car and electronics industries) underpinning its development, the Japanese identified Brazil as the best fountain of football knowledge. They imported the cream from the Samba Kings - and other countries - to help foster their own football culture.

Not only Brazilian legend Zico, but Serbian superstar Dragan Stojkovic (both to later coach in the J-League), Argentine Ramon Diaz and German FIFA World Cup winner Pierre Littbarski were brought in alongside home-grown greats such as "King" Kazu Miura in those early years.

Socceroos Steve Corica, Tony Popovic and Aurelio Vidmar also played in the J-League later in the 1990s as it became a popular destination for a number of players from around the world who were looking to play football in a growing, and professional, environment.

> "Local fans have been able to see J-League teams first hand in Australia"

Now in its 17th season, Australian fans have been fortunate to see first-hand some J-League sides in their pomp. Gamba Osaka for instance played Melbourne Victory and Adelaide United in the 2008 AFC Champions League. The Victory game was a memorable 4-3 win to the Japanese side at Docklands. And of course, Gamba went on to destroy Adelaide in the 2008 final.

The Reds also matched it with Kashima Antlers in the lead up to the final while the Central Coast Mariners hosted Kawasaki Frontale this year with the J-League side putting on a performance that will live long in the memory (a stylish 5-0 thrashing).

There's little doubt about the strength of J-League teams. And in an interesting cultural shade - and in stark contrast to, for example, the Socceroos - the bulk of the Japanese national team remains J-League-based.

It's a point taken up by Japan-born Naoki Imaya, a now-retired former A-League player with New Zealand Knights, who now runs a football school in Tokyo which teaches the game's skills in English (http://www.naocastle.com/blog/). »

FIXTURE HISTORY

From 1956 to 2009, it's 25 goals apiece

Games	15
Japan wins	5
Australia wins	6
Draws	4
Goals scored (inc shootouts)	**Japan** 25 **Australia** 25

FIXTURES

2009	Japan 0 Australia 0	Yokohama, Japan (FIFA World Cup qualifier)
2007	Japan 1 Australia 1 AET (Japan win 4-3 on penalties)	Hanoi, Vietnam (AFC Asian Cup)
2006	Australia 3 Japan 1	Kaiserslautern, Germany (FIFA World Cup)
2001	Japan 3 Australia 0	Ecopa, Japan (friendly)
1998	Australia 0 Japan 3	Adelaide, Australia (friendly)
1996	Australia 1 Japan 4	Wollongong, Australia (friendly)
1996	Australia 3 Japan 0	Melbourne, Australia (friendly)
1995	Australia 2 Japan 1	Sydney, Australia (friendly)
1994	Japan 1 Australia 1	Hiroshima, Japan (Kirin Cup)
1994	Japan 0 Australia 0	Tokyo, Japan (friendly)
1969	Japan 1 Australia 3	Seoul, South Korea (FIFA World Cup qualifier)
1968	Australia 2 Japan 2	Sydney, Australia (friendly)
1968	Australia 3 Japan 1	Melbourne, Australia (friendly)
1968	Australia 1 Japan 3	Adelaide, Australia (friendly)
1956	Australia 2 Japan 0	Melbourne, Australia (Olympic Games Round One)

The Blue Samurai have [illegible] following.

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"Many young footballers in Japan dream to become a J-league player, so I guess the kids can have a clear target of what they want to become," he says.

"When I have attended schools in Japan and asked the question, 'Who wants to become a professional footballer?' everyone puts their hands up. 'Who wants to play in the J-league?' and again, everyone puts their hands up. 'Who wants to become a professional footballer overseas?' Only a few put their hands up..."

The contrast with the A-League is also stark, as Imaya notes. "J-league teams like to knock the ball around and use the midfield as they have many players with great technical abilities. Technique is something they heavily focus on from a young age."

> "Technique is something they heavily focus on in Japanese football from a young age"

Two contrasting but strong football cultures, the confederation's top two ranked nations - it all makes for an intoxicating mix when the Blue Samurai stride out onto this iconic sporting venue tonight. ■

STAR MEN

Shunsuke Nakamura
What a rare treat to see first-hand what Celtic fans see every week. The Japanese playmaker is one of the greats of Asian football and has become a real fan favourite with the Scottish giant.

Quite simply, he is brilliant from a set-piece with great vision for playing balls through from just behind the forward line. The former Yokohama Marinos player is also surprisingly tough for someone with such a sleek frame.

The 30-year-old has blazed a trail for other Japanese players to succeed in Europe having also played for Reggina in Italy before his move to the SPL heavyweight in 2005.

Nakamura, from southern Tokyo, was also the first Japanese player to score in the UEFA Champions League and has been one of Gordon Strachan's first-choice players alongside Aussie Scott McDonald.

Yasuhito Endo
Like Nakamura, Endo is a wizard on the ball; a creator, a goal-scorer and a constant danger to opposition sides in the attacking third. Just ask Aurelio Vidmar's Reds.

Endo's Gamba Osaka took Adelaide United apart in last season's AFC Champions League Final, winning 5-0 on aggregate. The smiling assassin was at the heart of the demolition with a first half goal in the 3-0 first leg win.

The 29-year-old has been named in the J-League All-Star side six times and has made his name with the Osaka club after signing eight seasons ago.

Endo has made over 75 appearances for the national team.

Keiji Tamada
Like Endo, Australian fans have had the chance to see this silky-skilled midfielder in action during the 2009 AFC Champions League. Playing for Nagoya Grampus, the J-League side came up against the Newcastle Jets twice in the tournament's group stages.

And he looked every inch the star man when coming on as a substitute in the first game in Nagoya. Tamada squared things up for the home side with a superbly executed free-kick over the wall, which left young Jets goalkeeper Ben Kennedy stranded.

Sadly for home fans, he didn't play in the return leg in Newcastle.

Tamada has a similar role to Endo - utilising his vision and tight ball skills to open up sides. And he's a dead-ball specialist as we've seen.

The 29-year-old also scored for the Blue Samurai in the 2006 FIFA World Cup against Brazil in a 4-1 loss.

Makoto Hasebe
Sydney FC fans may remember Hasebe. During the A-League club's AFC Champions League jaunt they came up against Urawa Red Diamonds.

The defensive midfielder was a lynchpin alongside Yuki Abe in that successful Urawa side that went on to win the 2007 ACL crown.

It was perhaps no surprise that Hasebe moved to Germany as he was coached by German Holger Osieck in Saitama. He signed on with VFL Wolfsburg last year and his Bundesliga experience is toughening up Hasebe, 25, who debuted for Japan in 2006 against the USA and played 90 minutes against the Socceroos in February's 0-0 draw.

Tamada (right) and Hasebe (above right)

AUSTRALIA

Fill in numbers as line-ups are announced

GOALKEEPERS

- Brad **Jones**
- Michael **Petkovic**
- Mark **Schwarzer**

DEFENDERS

- Scott **Chipperfield**
- Chris **Coyne**
- Adrian **Madaschi**
- Mark **Milligan**
- Lucas **Neill**
- Jade **North**
- Matthew **Spiranovic**
- Shane **Stefanutto**
- Luke **Wilkshire**
- Rhys **Williams**

MIDFIELDERS

- Mark **Bresciano**
- Jacob **Burns**
- Tim **Cahill**
- Nick **Carle**
- David **Carney**
- Jason **Culina**
- Richard **Garcia**
- Vince **Grella**
- Brett **Holman**
- Mile **Jedinak**
- Mile **Sterjovski**
- Carl **Valeri**

FORWARDS

- Bruce **Djite**
- Harry **Kewell**
- Josh **Kennedy**
- Scott **McDonald**
- Dario **Vidosic**

GOALSCORERS

V JAPAN

GOALKEEPERS

- Seigo **Narazaki**
- Ryoto **Tsuzuki**
- Eiji **Kawashima**

DEFENDERS

- Yuji **Nakazawa**
- Satoshi **Yamaguchi**
- Marcus Tulio **Tanaka**
- Yuichi **Komano**
- Yasuyuki **Konno**
- Yuto **Nagatomo**
- Tomoaki **Makino**
- Atsuto **Uchida**

MIDFIELDERS

- Shunsuke **Nakamura**
- Hideo **Hashimoto**
- Yasuhito **Endo**
- Keng[illegible] **Nakamura**
- Daisuke **Matsui**
- Yuki **Abe**
- Makoto **Hasebe**
- Keisuke **Honda**
- Shinji **Kagawa**
- Naoki **Yamada**

FORWARDS

- Keiji **Tamada**
- Y[illegible]o **Okubo**
- Kisho **Yano**
- Shinji **Okazaki**
- Shinzo **Koroki**

GOALSCORERS

Meet your Socceroos

Here is the squad picked by Pim Verbeek to take on Japan in tonight's FIFA World Cup qualifier

Pim Verbeek

Age 53
Position Head Coach
Appointed in December 2007 after successful coaching stints in the AFC, the Dutchman has been a huge success.

Henk Duut

Age 45
Position Coach
An experienced player in his native Holland, Duut has also coached in his homeland as well as Japan.

Graham Arnold

Age 45
Position Coach
A decorated Socceroo who has been part of the coaching set-up for the last decade.

FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA STAFF

Phillip Woianski Head of Delegation
Pim Verbeek Head Coach
Gary Moretti Team Manager
Graham Arnold Coach
Henk Duut Coach
Tony Franken Goalkeeping Coach
Ron Smith Technical Analyst
Darren Burgess Conditioner
Dr Peter Brukner Doctor
Phil Coles Senior Physiotherapist
Les Gellis Physiotherapist
Luke Attwell Masseur
Dom Rabsch Equipment Manager
Martin Felice Equipment Assistant
Adam Mark Media Manager
Lindsay McNeill TV Unit
Mark Saliba Security

AUSTRALIA

Goalkeepers

Brad Jones

Age 27
Position Goalkeeper
Club Middlesbrough (England)
Appearances 1

A long-time understudy to Mark Schwarzer at Middlesbrough, 2009 was something of a watershed year.

While Middlesbrough was recently relegated to the English Championship, Jones established himself as the club's top shot stopper after beating off stiff opposition from teammate Ross Turnbull. The Perth-born glovesman has represented Australia just once before: in 2007 he faced off against an Alvaro Recoba and Diego Forlan-led Uruguay in a friendly That night the Socceroos went down 2-1.

Michael Petkovic

Age 32
Position Goalkeeper
Club Sivasspor (Turkey)
Appearances 6

Petkovic is coming off the back of a brilliant season in the Turkish Super League.

Along with brother Jason, also a keeper, Michael has represented the Socceroos, albeit intermittently, since 2001 Was chosen for the 2005 Confederations Cup and started against Tunisia in the third game. He has been plying his trade in Turkey in the last few years, first with Trabzonspor before moving to Sivasspor in 2005-06. This season, Petkovic has helped his team beat both Fenerbahce and Galatasaray

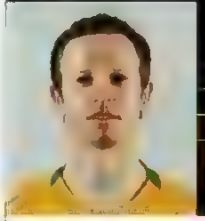
Mark Schwarzer

Age 36
Position Goalkeeper
Club Fulham (England)
Appearances 66

A move from Middlesbrough to London club Fulham has re-invigorated our brilliant shot-stopper.

Mark's place in Australian footballing history is set thanks to his dramatic FIFA World Cup qualifying heroics against Uruguay in 2005. He began his Socceroo career in similar fashion by starring in a shoot-out during a 1993 FIFA World Cup qualifier against Canada in his first senior appearance An experienced star in the English Premiership, "Schwarzy' has proved a fan fave wherever he's played

Defenders



David Carney

Age 25
Position Defender
Club Sheffield United (England)
Appearances 18

An exciting attacking defender, Carney has been in the Australian spotlight since his A-League debut in 2005.

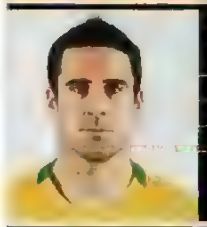
David caught the eye with some outstanding performances at the 2007 AFC Asian Cup finals, playing in the role of left wing-back. It earned him a contract with Sheffield United after he'd made his name at Sydney FC in the A-League. He is now battling for a regular spot with Scott Chipperfield down the left of the Socceroo defence and has been loaned out to Norwich City this season

Scott Chipperfield

Age 33
Position Defender
Club FC Basel (Switzerland)
Appearances 61

One of our most reliable performers at the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany, Chipperfield is hungry for more.

After winning his second Australian Player of the Year award in 2006 and moving to Switzerland, where he continued his club success at Basel. A natural left sided player with pace and an ability to [illegible] for his performances, he has been a regular in the national team since debuting in 1998. Chipperfield's brilliant goal in Tashkent during this qualifying campaign will go down as one of our most vital



Chris Coyne

Age 30
Position Defender
Club Colchester United (England)
Appearances 6

Consistency and a steely resolve has paid off for this fourth England-based defender.

Older brother of Perth Glory's Jamie Coyne, Chris has [illegible]. Originally at West Ham, he found form and stability at Luton [illegible] per Socceroos [illegible] alongside Lucas Neill at the heart of the defence. Coyne has been crucial during the Socceroo's qualification process

Adrian Madaschi

Age 26
Position Defender
Club Portogruaro-Summaga (Italy)
Appearances 4

Madaschi returns to the senior side for the first time since 2004. Then, the central defender helped the Socceroos qualify for the 2006 FIFA World Cup.

Now, the Perth-born former U/23 international is aiming to play his way into regular contention as we edge closer towards South Africa. Madaschi left Australia as a youngster for Serie A side Atalanta. While his career there did not hit the heights he had hoped Madaschi is vastly experienced from his time in Scotland and Italy

Mark Milligan

Age 23
Position Defender
Club Shanghai Shenhua (China)
Appearances 6

The former national U/23 captain has a new-found spring in his step after finding form in the Chinese Super League.

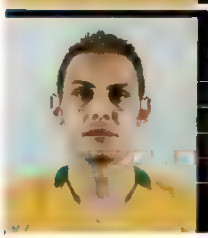
Milligan first burst onto the scene with Northern Spirit but did enough in the first season of the A-League with Sydney FC to be noticed by the national team. Milligan has a no nonsense approach and a natural competitiveness and has been known to play a variety of roles as a defender and midfielder which he showcased at the 2007 AFC Asian Cup

Lucas Neill

Age 31
Position Defender
Club West Ham United (England)
Appearances 49

One of Australia's most recognisable stars, Neill seems to grow in stature every time he plays for his country.

[illegible] himself as our defensive linchpin and leader. At the 2006 FIFA World Cup, he became one of our most outstanding players after a series of commanding performances. Neill is the captain at English Premier League side West Ham and was also a favourite at his previous club, Blackburn Rovers.

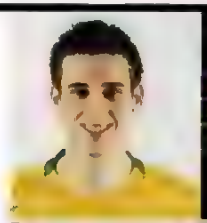


Jade North

Age 27
Position Defender
Club Incheon United (Korea Republic)
Appearances 24

Jade North's growing experience makes the Incheon United player a valuable Socceroo asset.

A mobile and versatile defender, North fits the bill for the modern Socceroo perfectly. The former Newcastle Jets defender has learnt his trade in the Australian system, having represented in our national U/17 U/20 and U/23 [illegible]. And Taree-born North's form now continues to impress in Korea's highly demanding K-League



Matthew Spiranovic

Age 20
Position Defender
Club FC Nurnberg (Germany)
Appearances 2

The player widely touted as a future national team star has already impressed in Germany's top flights.

Currently playing his club football in Germany's second tier, the Melbourne-born defender has already represented Australia at youth level and debuted in a friendly against Ghana last year. His assured performances at the Olympics in China is proof that "Spira" can be part of the national team for years to come. Tall, tough and confident on the ball, the Geelong-born player is all class.

Shane Stefanutto

Age 29
Position Defender
Club FC Lyn Oslo (Norway)
Appearances 1

A product of Queensland, Stefanutto has become a regular call-up to Pim Verbeek's squads.

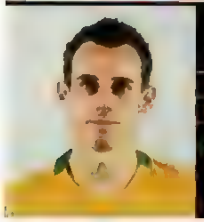
The Cairns-born attacking defender provides another weapon for Verbeek down the Socceroo left. After graduating from Queensland's Institute of Sport and a successful spell with Brisbane Strikers, Shane left Australia in 2004 and has been playing his football ever since in the Norwegian league - firstly with Lillestrom and now at Lyn Oslo. The livewire made his debut in a friendly against China in 2007.

Rhys Williams

Age 20
Position Defender
Club Middlesbrough (England)
Appearances 0

Potentially, Williams could evolve as one of Australia's most important defenders over the next decade.

Williams was born in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea to play for Australia rather than Wales, a country he was also eligible to play for and had already called him into camp. The 187cm Perth-born defender was also a regular in the Welsh U/21 national team and is on the books at Middlesbrough who signed him to a two-year deal in early 2009. This year Williams has played for Burnley on loan.



Luke Wilkshire

Age 27
Position Defender
Club Dinamo Moscow (Russia)
Appearances 33

The south coast produced has been accurately described as very mobile, speedy and technical.

Playing for the U/23s at the Athens Olympics put Luke in the mix for the Socceroos. He moved from Middlesbrough to Bristol City in 2003 where regular first team football improved his game, as shown by his impressive displays at the 2006 FIFA World Cup. This tenacious midfielder moved to FC Twente and this season signed with Russian club Dinamo Moscow. Wilkshire has become a regular Socceroo starter.

JULY ISSUE
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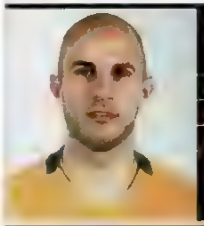
Midfielders

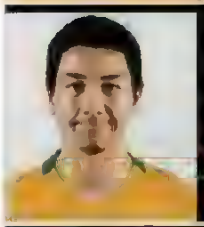


Mark Bresciano

Age 29
Position Midfielder
Club US Palermo (Italy)
Appearances 49

Crucial goals from this decorated player have proven the difference for Australian on countless occasions.

After representing the Young Socceroos in 1999 and the U/23s at the Sydney Olympics in 2000, Mark has etched out an excellent career in the highly technical and tactically demanding Italian Serie A. Clubs such as Empoli, Parma and now Palermo have benefited from his intelligent attacking runs and precision free kicks. One of Australia's stars of the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany and in this campaign.

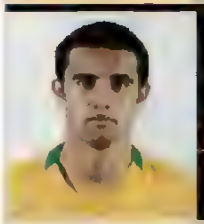


Jacob Burns

Age 31
Position Midfielder
Club FC Unirea Valahorum (Romania)
Appearances 4

A widely-travelled midfielder and former teammate of Mark Viduka and Harry Kewell at Leeds United.

After a successful stint with Parramatta Power, Jacob spent six seasons in Yorkshire, England with first Leeds then Barnsley before moving to Poland then Romania. He was excellent in Australia's midfield in last year's 1-0 win over Uzbekistan in Tashkent. Hard working Jacob debuted in 2000 when the Aussies shocked Scotland 2-0 at Hampden Park in a friendly. A versatile option for Pim Verbeek in the middle of the park.



Tim Cahill

Age 29
Position Midfielder
Club Everton (England)
Appearances 29

Already a legend at his English club Everton, Cahill is one of Australia's most potent attacking weapons.

Tim will be forever etched in Australian football folklore as the first Aussie player to score at a FIFA World Cup when he slammed home the equaliser against Japan at Germany 2006. In England, he is arguably the best attacking midfielder in the EPL and makes a welcome return to the national team after missing some key games this year through injury. Cahill possesses an uncanny ability to score at crucial times.

Nick Carle

Age 27
Position Midfielder
Club Crystal Palace (England)
Appearances 7

Electric and skilful, this former A-League star is one of the country's most gifted talents.

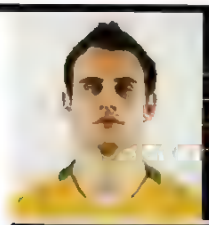
Nick is known for his flair and creativity and his ability to unlock defences with his trickery and vision. He featured in Australia's 2007 AFC Asian Cup campaign, scoring in the semi-final victory against Iraq and has since moved to Turkey and now with Crystal Palace in England. Nick won the A-League Golden Boot award as the league's top scorer of the Year for 2006/07 and is a real fan favourite.

Jason Culina

Age 28
Position Midfielder
Club Fortuna Düsseldorf
Appearances 24

Gold Coast United's brand-new marquee star, Culina is a crucial component in the Socceroo engine room.

Jason's mobility, link play, eye for goal and ability to play [illegible] journey to South Africa for the Socceroos. He is now considered to be one of the Socceroos most important players for his consistency and versatility. For PSV Eindhoven, he has won honours and played in the UEFA European Champions League and the UEFA Cup.



Richard **Garcia**

Age 27
Position Midfielder
Club Hull City (England)
Appearances 5

Garcia was a key player in Hull City's promotion to the English Premiership. Recently, he helped them stay there.

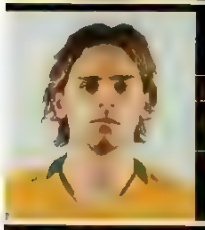
An attacking midfielder who has come back into the spotlight since his ongoing success with Hull City since 2008. Garcia left Australian shores as a youngster to join the famed West Ham United youth academy. Suffered a major knee injury in 2000, ending Sheringham's career at the Sydney Olympics. Made his debut for Australia in 2008 and was key in the Socceroos' last home game against Uzbekistan.

Vince **Grella**

Age 29
Position Midfielder
Club Blackburn Rovers (England)
Appearances 36

Grella is back to full fitness following a stop-start season due to injuries.

A hard-working central midfielder who closes down opposing players and mops up stray passes, Grella is a vital cog in the heart of the Socceroo midfield. He blossomed with Empoli in Serie A and upon their relegation in 2004 was signed by Parma where he was reunited with his good mate and fellow Socceroo Mark Bresciano. Since then he has played for Torino before moving to Blackburn in England.

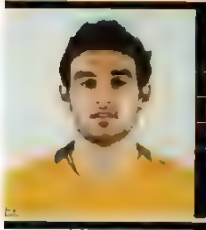


Brett **Holman**

Age 25
Position Midfielder
Club Az Alkmaar (Holland)
Appearances 24

A player with pace, Holman causes problems for opposition defence through his ability to find space.

The clever attacking midfielder burst onto the Aussie scene as a 17-year-old and was soon snapped up by Dutch giant Feyenoord. He was then loaned out to Excelsior, although the club was later relegated from the Dutch top flight. Brett then made his debut for the Socceroos that year. He is now with AZ Alkmaar where he has shown impressive form.

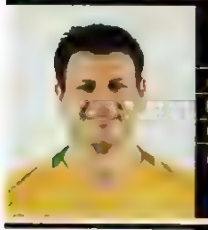


Mile **Jedinak**

Age 24
Position Midfielder
Club Genclerbirligi SK (Turkey)
Appearances 4

A star in the A-League for Central Coast Mariners, Jedinak attracted attention from suitors from Turkey.

Only a couple of years ago Mile was playing in the New South Wales state league. But after two outstanding seasons with Central Coast in the A-League, he has forced his powerful frame into Socceroos reckoning as well as making a move to the Turkish Super League. An enforcer in midfield, Jedinak provides quality defensive cover and also possess a powerful strike.



Mile **Sterjovski**

Age 29
Position Midfielder
Club Derby County (England)
Appearances 32

A mainstay in the national set-up, Sterjovski has been playing in top European leagues for close to a decade.

Mile is another talented product of the Wollongong football [illegible] where he has made his name as an attacking wide midfielder. In January he moved to Derby in England where his class and determination impressed the local fans despite his side's poor run of results.

Carl **Valeri**

Age 24
Position Midfielder
Club U.S. Triestina (Italy)
Appearances 17

Canberra-raised Valeri has refined his game in Italy and delivers whenever required in the Socceroo midfield.

The defensive midfielder has represented Australia at all levels until made his debut for the Socceroos in March 2007 against China. Carl has played all his professional football in Italy after he was signed by [illegible] and loaned him out to lower-level clubs to gain experience. With age still very much still on his side, Valeri is expected to be a regular Socceroo for years to come.

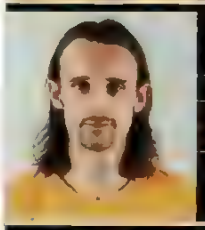
Strikers

Bruce **Djite**

Age 22
Position Striker
Club Genclerbirligi (Turkey)
Appearances 7

A strong and fast centre forward, Djite is also gifted with both intelligence and maturity.

Bruce is one of the hottest players in the Australian ranks, after bursting on to the scene with some memorable displays during his time at Adelaide United. Djite was also pivotal for our U/23s during Olympics qualification, showing an ability to hold the ball up in his role as target man. Djite has continued to live up to his promise, showing promising form in the pressured environment of Turkey's top league.

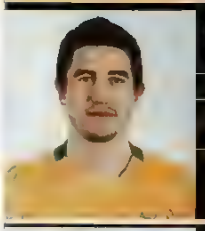


Josh **Kennedy**

Age 26
Position Striker
Club Karlsruher (Germany)
Appearances 13

A tall and hard-working striker who continues to score at crucial times for the Socceroos.

Who could forget big Josh's contribution to the Socceroos 2006 FIFA World Cup campaign? After coming on late in the opener against Japan, it was the 192cm striker's presence that unsettled the Japanese defence. He continues to be a dangerous impact player for the Socceroos as evidenced by his great form during this campaign where goals against Qatar and Uzbekistan have proved vital.

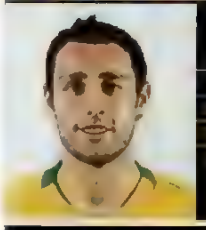


Harry **Kewell**

Age 30
Position Striker
Club Galatasaray (Turkey)
Appearances 40

Still widely regarded as Australia's talisman, Kewell has beaten serious injury to return to top form.

Recently voted one of the top five Australian footballers of all time by *FourFourTwo* magazine, Kewell is an Aussie sports icon. His performances at the 2006 FIFA World Cup were memorable as were his goals over a decade ago in a FIFA World Cup qualifier against Iran. Harry is enjoying a new lease of life in Turkish football with Galatasaray where he regularly scores and creates opportunities for fellow attackers.



Scott **McDonald**

Age 25
Position Striker
Club Celtic (Scotland)
Appearances 11

A prolific scorer in the Scottish Premier League, his goal-scoring prowess will prove a huge asset for the national team.

Consistent performances for Motherwell earned Scott a full international call up for the Socceroos against Bahrain in 2006. Since then, the Melbourne-born striker has become one of the hottest Aussie strikers in Europe scoring a bagful of goals for Scottish giant Celtic in the league and in the UEFA Champions League.

Dario **Vidosic**

Age 22
Position Striker
Club FC Nurnberg (Germany)
Appearances 0

The former Roar attacker has a number of memorable A-League goal-scoring highlights already behind him.

Vidosic had a one-week trial with German Bundesliga side Nurnberg, where he was successful in earning a contract. Despite limited opportunities in his first season, Vidosic is now coming into his own. Just recently, the Australian Institute of Sport graduate scored a crucial goal in Nurnberg's 1-1 draw against Greuther Fürth. It was his second goal in consecutive games. He looms as a future Socceroo star.

TURNING POINTS

on the road to South Africa

We look back at some of the turning points and key moments which have defined Australia's successful FIFA World Cup qualifying campaign over the last 18 months WORDS Aidan Ormond

THE SOCCEROOS' SUCCESSFUL QUALIFYING CAMPAIGN for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa was staged in two parts.

The first part was the round three qualifiers for the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) which kicked off in February 2008, in Melbourne.

Over the following five months the group pitted Australia against Iraq, China and Qatar in the Socceroos' first ever AFC FIFA World Cup qualifying route.

Australia progressed from this stage and moved into the fourth and final round of qualifiers which began in September last year.

Australia was grouped in with Qatar again, Uzbekistan, Bahrain and regional rivals and tonight's opponent Japan in group A.

Ahead of the final group game tonight, we look back at some of the campaign's defining moments and the major turning points during an 18 months which ended in qualification following match day six on June 6, 2009, with a 0-0 draw in Doha.

After traversing all points across the Asian confederation – from Kunming in China, to Dubai and Doha, Tashkent, Manama and Yokohama – the Socceroos and their backup team have brought a new level of professionalism and nous to their qualifying destiny.

The excitement of the last couple of weeks has caught the imagination and tonight should be another fascinating chapter in this successful campaign for South Africa 2010.

1 Craig Moore's courageous return

If there was one man who epitomised the spirit of the Socceroos, it's Craig Moore. He's provided Australia's defence with clear and calm authority at key moments.

But more than that, his decision to continue playing after receiving shock news about his health (he was diagnosed with testicular cancer late last year and underwent critical surgery to stem the disease), showed what playing football – and the Socceroos – means to this humble, yet inspiring character.

A dignified, low-profile exit was how Moore opted to play his last game for the national team. It was the first game of the campaign against Qatar in Melbourne in February 2008. But nine months later the Brisbane Roar defender was persuaded to don the national shirt once more in his hometown of Brisbane. It was like he'd never left.

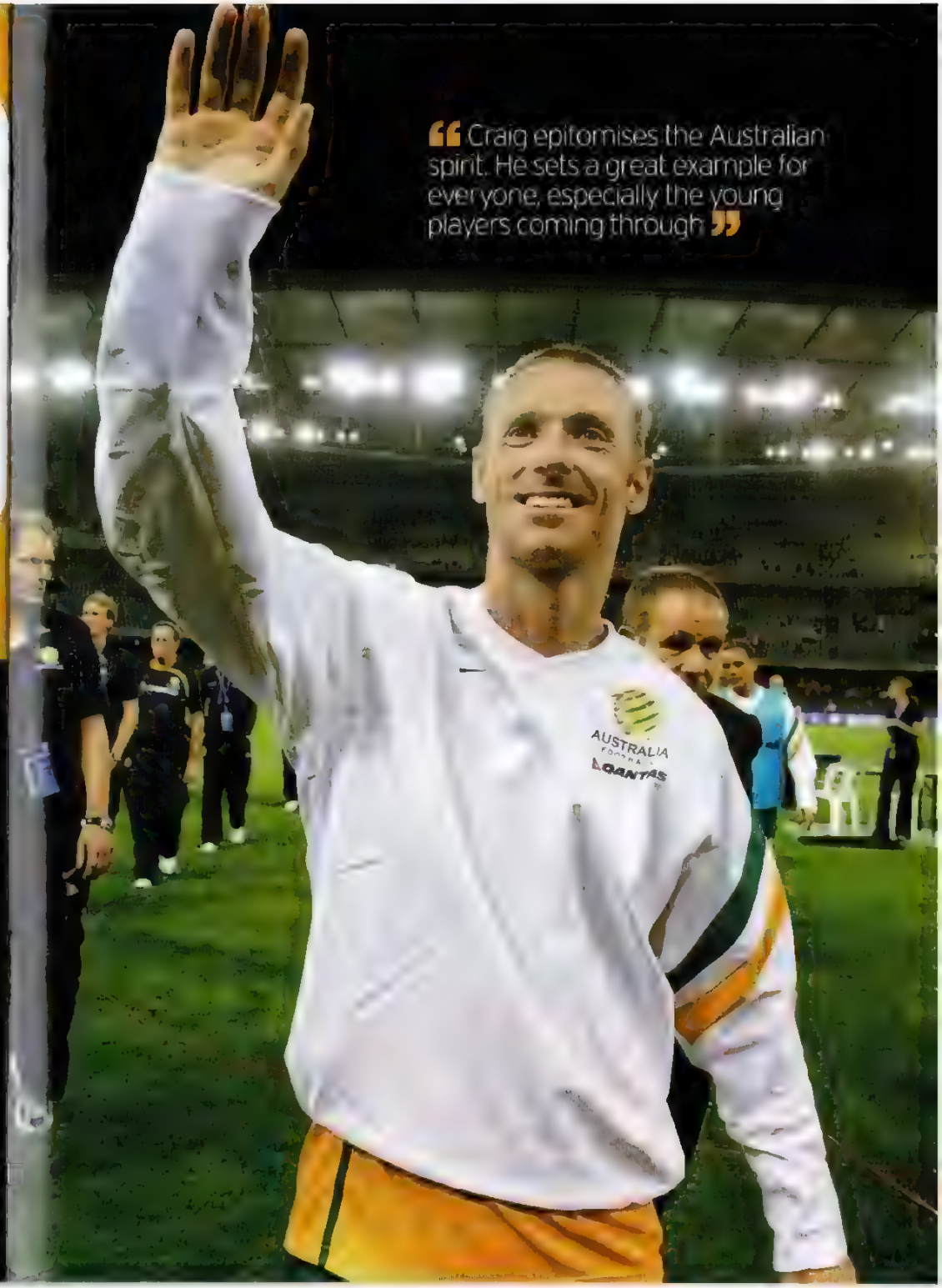
And after missing the Bahrain game in November due to his health situation, the former Glasgow Ranger returned for the marquee clash of the group against Japan in Yokohama last February.

In this classic top-two battle and against a tidal wave of blue shirts, "Moorey" remained a rock alongside Lucas Neill in repelling the dangerous Japanese onslaught.

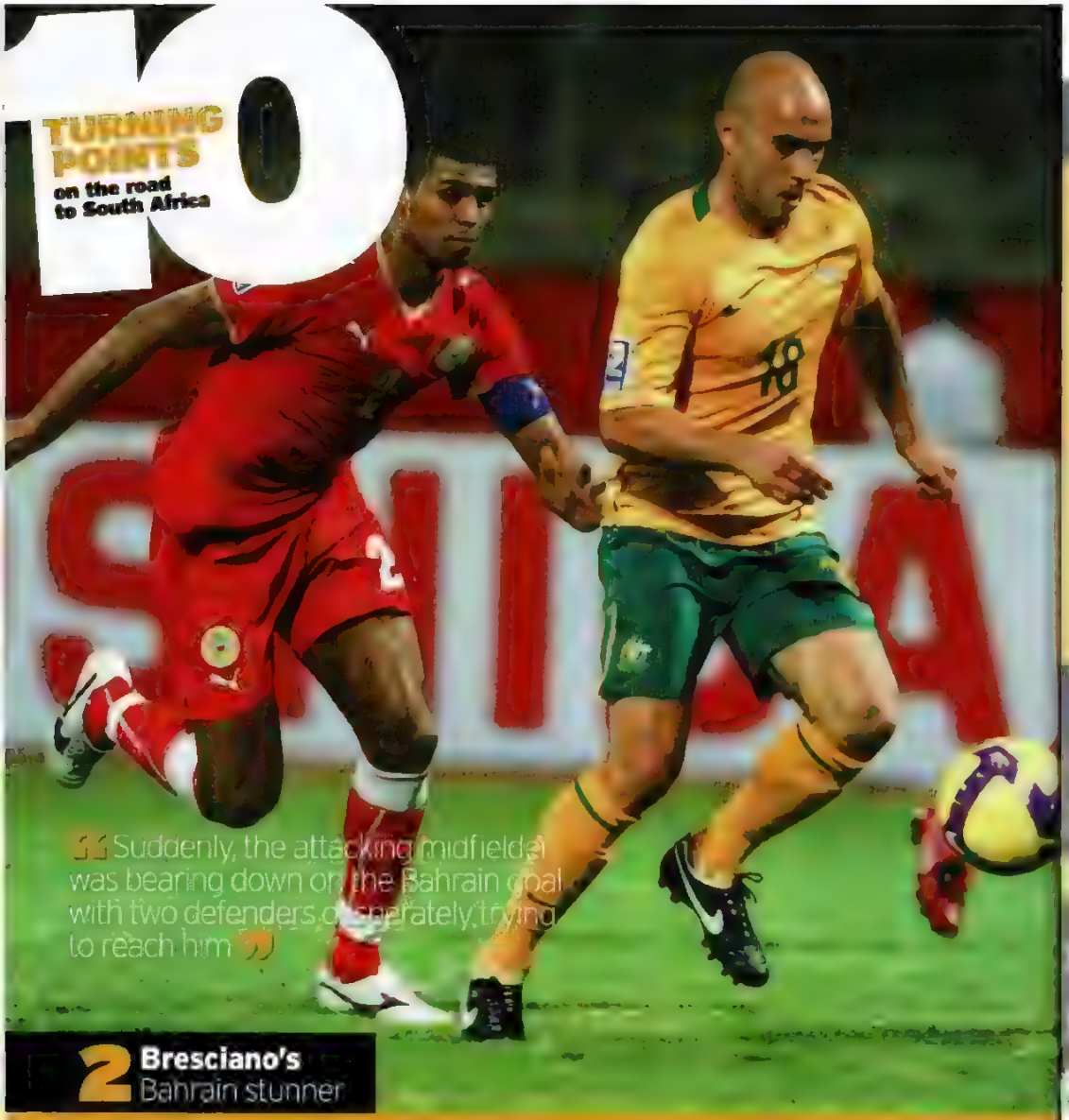
"He has a massive effect on the team. He has a wealth of experience with what he has been through and what he has done throughout his career," says Socceroo teammate and wingback Luke Wilkshire.

It's this courage under fire and bravery as a person that so endears Moore to the fans and his teammates. "He optimises the Australian players," adds Wilkshire. "He sets a great example for everyone, especially the young players coming through. On the field, off the field, in and around the team, he plays a huge part."

Moore's spirit has mirrored the Socceroos' determination to succeed on the road to South Africa 2010.



TURNING POINTS
on the road to South Africa



"Suddenly, the attacking midfielder was bearing down on the Bahrain goal with two defenders desperately trying to reach him"

2 Bresciano's Bahrain stunner

How important was Bresciano's last-minute winner in Bahrain? A draw would have placed the Socceroos on seven points with Japan breathing down their necks ahead of the sides' clash in Tokyo two months later.

But three points instead of one gave Australia a critical buffer - and confidence - going into 2009 and the test in Tokyo.

The vital strike came with the scores locked at 0-0. After Schwarzer's 92nd minute goal kick made it to well inside the Bahrain half, it wasn't dealt with convincingly by Bahrain's central defenders and a skewed attempted clearance fell invitingly for an on-rushing Bresciano.

Suddenly, the attacking midfielder was bearing down on the Bahrain goal with two out of position defenders desperately trying to reach him. On the bumpy surface at the National Stadium in Manama, the Italy based star coolly kept possession and set himself up for a shot just inside the box.

For a second, it appeared that Bresciano had hesitated too long but the wily Palermo star steadied, shielded the ball from the trailing leg of a defender then smashed it beautifully through the keeper's outstretched reach and into the net.

It was a goal of immense importance at a critical stage of the FIFA World Cup qualifiers. A 100% record from three games sent out a powerful message to the rest of the confederation - and gave the green and gold belief that automatic qualification as a top two nation was a real possibility.

3 Schwarzer averts China crisis in Kunming

With just minutes left of the qualifier in Kunming, China last March 2008, Mark Schwarzer dashed out of his penalty box and took down a Chinese striker.

The referee pointed to the spot. Aussie hearts dropped. At 0-0, a goal to China so late would have almost certainly handed a physical Chinese side the points against a weakened Socceroo line up playing in unfamiliar high altitude.

But, as teams around the world have often discovered, Schwarzer is a master in these situations. He coolly saved Shao Jiayi's spot kick and the Aussies hung on to leave Kunming with a valuable point, as the man himself explains.

"For 90 minutes of the game, barring two really good chances to score which we didn't take, we really played our game plan to a tee," the Socceroo keeper recalls.

"We frustrated China and had control of the match. Then we conceded a silly penalty right at the end. I still think it was a harsh decision but that's how it goes.

"After the penalty was given, I thought, 'We've given it away here. I've messed it up. I've messed up a great opportunity to come away with a great result away.'

"I was just lucky that I was able to make amends. I didn't make a decision to go one way or another. I just tried to stay on my feet for as long as possible and react to his shot. I saved it with my legs as I dived a bit further than I actually needed to. I got a little bit of luck as well as it rebounded off my legs and came straight into my arms. I'm really glad as we had a lot of fan support there for that game."

4 Schwarzer's Tokyo heroics

The Socceroos were under the hammer. Playing Japan in Tokyo was always going to be a huge challenge, particularly considering some Socceroos would only arrive in the Japanese capital just 36 hours before kick-off.

The Japanese, with their array of attacking talent, were always going to threaten, and threaten they did. The temperature may have been cool in Yokohama but the pressure on the Aussie goal was white hot.

The Aussie midfielders worked their socks off denying space, getting tackles in and keeping the central corridor protected from the varied threats of Shunsuke Nakamura, Yasuhito Endo and Keiji Tamada.

And as the game edged into an exciting final 30 minutes, the Japanese ramped up the pressure as the tiring Aussies gifted more turnovers which began to cost Australia valuable possession and time.

Then the moment that had all Socceroo fans holding their collective breath. The skilful Endo was found free in space by Atsuto Uchida on the edge of the Socceroo box right in front of goal. This was the moment for Japan to press home their advantage but the Gamba Osaka man's smashing drive was palmed over brilliantly by Schwarzer.

Thanks to Schwarzy's heroics, there was no way past. The Fulham 'keeper proved the difference as Australia hung on for yet another pivotal and crucial point on the road to South Africa.

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5 Josh Kennedy's emergence as Socceroo strike weapon

Injury concerns to spearhead Mark Viduka have given Josh Kennedy a chance to stake his claim to the Socceroos' central striking position, and the tall striker has taken the chance with both feet (and head of course).

Kennedy was drafted in for Pim Verbeek's first FIFA World Cup qualifier against Qatar in February 2008. And it was the Germany based hitman's presence up front that helped batter the visitor's defensive walls.

The Socceroos found themselves three goals up at half-time thanks to Tim Cahill, Mark Bresciano and the opening goal of the night - and the campaign - to the man Socceroo fans call 'Jesus'.

From wide right, Brett Emerton powered it to space before planting a pinpoint perfect cross onto the head of the former U/17 international and his huge frame leapt high to head home. It was to be a regular sight as the campaign kicked into gear.

In Australia's opening match, Kennedy had made a powerful statement about his intent to lead the line during the campaign.

> "Josh Kennedy had made a powerful statement about his intent to lead the line"

The Victorian continued his goal-scoring with another headed effort against Qatar in Brisbane later in 2008. And this year it was the head of Kennedy which again made the difference as he broke the deadlock against Uzbekistan in Sydney to help Australia to three more valuable points.

And it's not just the goals - it's the way that Kennedy has intelligently linked up with the midfield as well as caused trouble with his height in the box that has impressed.

After such an eye-catching cameo at Germany 2006, Kennedy has shown Pim Verbeek that he won't let us down as the number one striker in the absence of the one and only 'Dukes'.

His emergence has been a hugely welcome and timely boon for the Socceroos on the road to South Africa. Can Kennedy net tonight against Japan?

TURNING POINTS
on the road to South Africa

6 Harry Kewell's classy return

With injury ruling him out of the earlier FIFA World Cup qualifiers in 2008, Kewell returned to the Socceroo line-up for the clash against Iraq in Brisbane on June 1.

Handed the armband in the absence of Lucas Neill, Kewell announced he was back with a performance that spoke volumes for his commitment and importance to the green and gold.

Kewell was at the heart of everything and found the net early in the second half with a bullet header. His substitution later in the game was greeted with rapturous applause.

It signaled that Kewell was back. He backed that up with good games in Dubai against Iraq and in Doha against Qatar – where he scored in the 3-1 win and helped set up Brett Emerton's second. What's more, he lead the Aussies magnificently taking on the skipper's role with a natural ease.

And on the final round of FIFA World Cup qualifiers this year, Kewell kept his cool to slot home a spot-kick, Australia's second goal against Uzbekistan last April, to wrap up the three points.

Earlier this month in Qatar his athletic and eye-catching performance in the 0-0 draw was classic Kewell. After a wretched run of injuries, his return has added a dash of pure class when needed most on the road to the next FIFA World Cup.

> Harry Kewell's performance spoke volumes for his commitment and importance...

7 Chipperfield's Tashkent cracker

The first game of the final round of qualifiers was always going to be difficult. After all, Australia had never visited Uzbekistan before and this wily opponent hadn't lost a qualifier at home for 18 months.

Compounding this was the game-day scare where Jason Culina and Jade North succumbed to stomach bugs.

But Australia's confidence was high after defeating the Dutch just days earlier in a friendly. And Scott Chipperfield epitomised this sense of belief. His first half display was outstanding in his role as a marauding left back.

And it was this sense of purpose that took him inside the box in the first half, as Luke Wilkshire explains. "I remember it well. I was heading down the bye-line and looked across to see who was in the box. It was odd to see 'Chippers' in there. But as soon as I put the ball in, he was on the end of it. It was strange for a right-back crossing for a left-back to score in a game away from home, but it was a great goal."

It proved the winner. The goal helped the Socceroos launch their final round of qualifiers in truly fine style.

8 Carl Valeri's coming of age on the world stage

The role of the holding midfielder has become a key component of Pim Verbeek's game-plan. Quite often two players are deployed in that position to strangle the opposition and in this campaign, it's been exciting to witness Valeri realise his potential in this area.

At only 23 years of age when the campaign kicked off, the Canberra-born starlet has provided a relentless work-rate, defensive cover and when need be, an ability to slot in alongside both Vince Grella or Jason Culina in the middle of the park. With injuries to Grella at key moments [illegible] has stepped up in his own right. Against Uzbekistan and Bahrain (both away), his contributions were very encouraging in difficult and trying circumstances.

And in Doha on the day Australia qualified for South Africa, he once again stepped up and showed [illegible] good he is and how great he can be.

Seven years in the hothouse of Italian football has been the perfect breeding ground for Valeri to play this role, and his rise has given the Socceroos a new [illegible]

> The Canberra-born starlet has provided a relentless work-rate, defensive cover and an ability to slot in alongside Grella or Culina

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TURNING POINTS
on the road to South Africa

9 Brett Emerton's Doha double

After the slender loss to Iraq in Dubai, Australia needed to bounce back quickly in June 2008. Qatar provided the perfect opportunity just days later and it was the Blackburn Rover who injected himself into the game with stunning effect. A brace for Emerton, one in each half, and a Harry Kewell strike wrapped the points up for Pim Verbeek's Socceroos.

Early in the first half and a flowing move laced with a dash of luck unlocked the Qataris. Brett Holman found Mark Bresciano wide on the left who finessed a low cross to Kewell. Australia's skipper missed his kick but the ball slid through perfectly for Emerton to slam home.

It was 1-0 to the Australians and Emerton made it two shortly after the break to take a stranglehold on the game. In the 56th minute, Schwarzer's punt down the middle reached Kewell. He flicked it on to Holman who found Emerton on the burst running into goal. His cool finish was classic Emo.

Emerton's goals took the sting out of Qatar and Kewell added a third to make the points safe. It was a timely reminder - given his injury later in the campaign - of Emerton's value as a tireless midfielder with a penchant for scoring regularly.

10 Finally, the fans

For the first time, Australia played in AFC FIFA World Cup qualifers. It threw out a challenge to the green and gold army. They took it on willingly.

Green and gold scarves around the bodies of weary but happy Aussie travellers turned up in far-flung places such as Tashkent, Manama, Yokohama, Kunming and Doha.

The fans have stepped up their loyalty to the men who've walked out into some intimidating cauldrons across the region.

"I am not sure if you would call my love a passion. I think my family and friends say it is more of an obsession," says Melbourne-based Socceroo fan Amelia Roth.

"It's about pride in your team and country," adds Ben Campton from Sydney. "These players are representing, not only a football team, but Australia itself."

Mark Schwerzer sums up one special moment: "The fans were as pumped as we were to get that point in Kunming. To enjoy that moment with them was special."

We salute you, the fans. You've played a huge part in this successful campaign to qualify for South Africa 2010.

So give it up for our boys in green & gold Go the Super-Socceroos in Super June

1.4.06

Big Josh turns Socceroo saviour... again

Josh Kennedy is gaining quite a reputation as a game-changer. Against Japan at the 2006 FIFA World Cup, the lanky Victorian from Wodonga was thrown in late and it was the striker's presence that unsettled Japan's backline, leading to Tim Cahill's equaliser.

Since his Socceroo debut three years ago, goals against Holland, South Africa, Liechtenstein and Qatar feature on the 194-cm forward's highlights reel. Then there was Uzbekistan in a crucial FIFA World Cup qualifier just two months ago in Sydney.

After 59 tough minutes, it was still 0-0. Like a boxer on his last legs, Uzbekistan were tiring in the wet. Socceroo supremo Pim Verbeek turned the screws, bringing Kennedy off the bench.

It proved a masterstroke and his go-ahead goal was something to savour six minutes after being introduced. Picking up the ball in their defensive third, the green and gold backline worked the ball out of defence then carried it left and right before a through-ball found man of the match Mark Bresciano waiting in the channel.

Just as he did for most of the night the Palermo man deceived his opponent, in this case marker Jasur Hasanov, allowing the ball to run into space. He ran it down, crossed first time with a perfect curling ball onto the head of the unmarked Karlsruhe man lurking in the box.

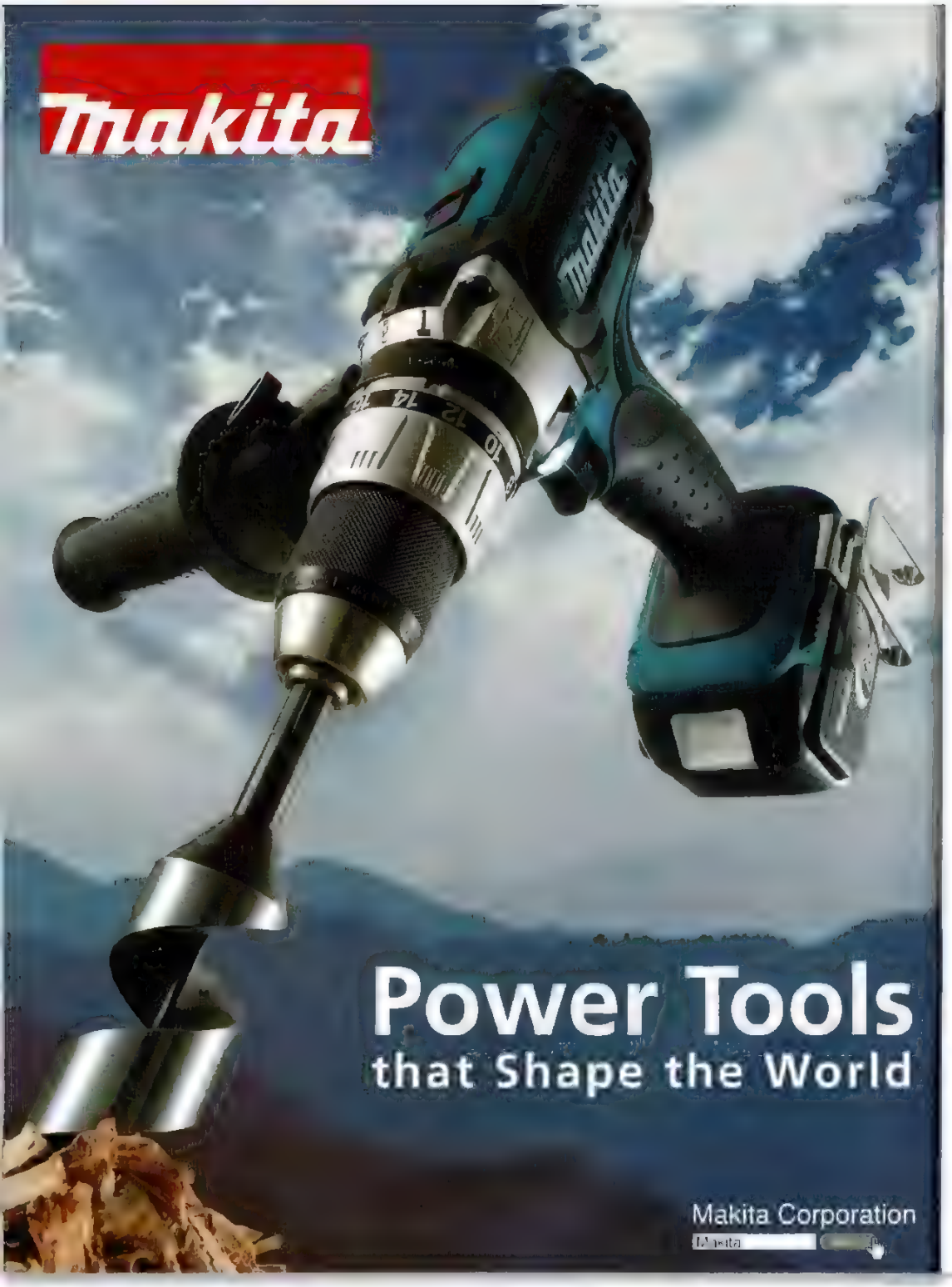
Despite being slightly off balance, the former Joey angled his header down low and on the wet pitch it sped off at pace past Nesterov's reach.

At the same end as John Aloisi scored "that goal", Kennedy's effort set off wild celebrations as over 57,000 rain-soaked fans exploded in delight while the striker was mobbed by delirious team-mates for a fist-pumping celebration at the corner-flag.

It was one of the most important goals in Kennedy's burgeoning Socceroo career, leading the way for the Aussies to score a second time (a cool Kewell penalty) minutes later to wrap up three more precious points on the road to South Africa.

With first-choice central striker Mark Viduka unavailable for this current campaign, Kennedy's memorable header and his form over the last 18 months has clearly underlined the growing importance of this imposing German-based striker on the road to South Africa 2010.

Aidan Ormond



REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

The Socceroos head to Limerick this August

The Socceroos kick off the new European season with a friendly against the Republic of Ireland in Limerick.

This should be a fascinating game given the rankings of both nations (at time of writing the Aussies were 29, the Irish at 34).

What's more, the Republic have a clutch of exciting English Premiership stars. Robbie Keane of Spurs, Damien Duff from Newcastle and star shot-stopper Shay Given of Manchester City to name three.

Add to that mix, Manchester United defender John O'Shea and it's a national side that's sure to ask plenty of questions.

And to top that off, the Irish are coached by one of the greats of Italian football, the wily Giovanni Trapattoni.

The 70-year-old is using this game as preparation for Ireland's crucial final three FIFA World Cup qualifiers over the remainder of the year

And with the Irish sitting just behind Italy at the top of their group, the Aussies can expect a confident opposition at Thomond Park in Limerick.

Ireland coach Giovanni Trapattoni

For the Australians, the game will no doubt bring back memories of the first time these two countries met six years ago. That day, the Irish won 2-1 with late goals from O'Shea and Clinton Morrison cancelling out Mark Viduka's effort at Lansdowne Road

The friendly was part of a three-game UK tour by the Socceroos in 2003. Earlier that year they'd famously defeated England in London 3-1 and, after the Irish game, Australia beat Jamaica 2-1 in Reading.

Against the Irish, the Aussie line-up featured Schwarzer, Neill, Popovic, Lazaridis, Emerton, Grella, Bresciano, Vidmar, Viduka, Aloisi and Chipperfield. It was the beginning of a generation that did us so proud at Germany 2006.

Although this was only the second time the two nations had met, the Socceroos played a "B" international in 1970 against a League of Ireland side in Dublin. Aussie greats such as Johnny Warren, Jim Mackay and Harry Williams played but the visitors lost 1-0. ■

DANGER MAN

Robbie Keane

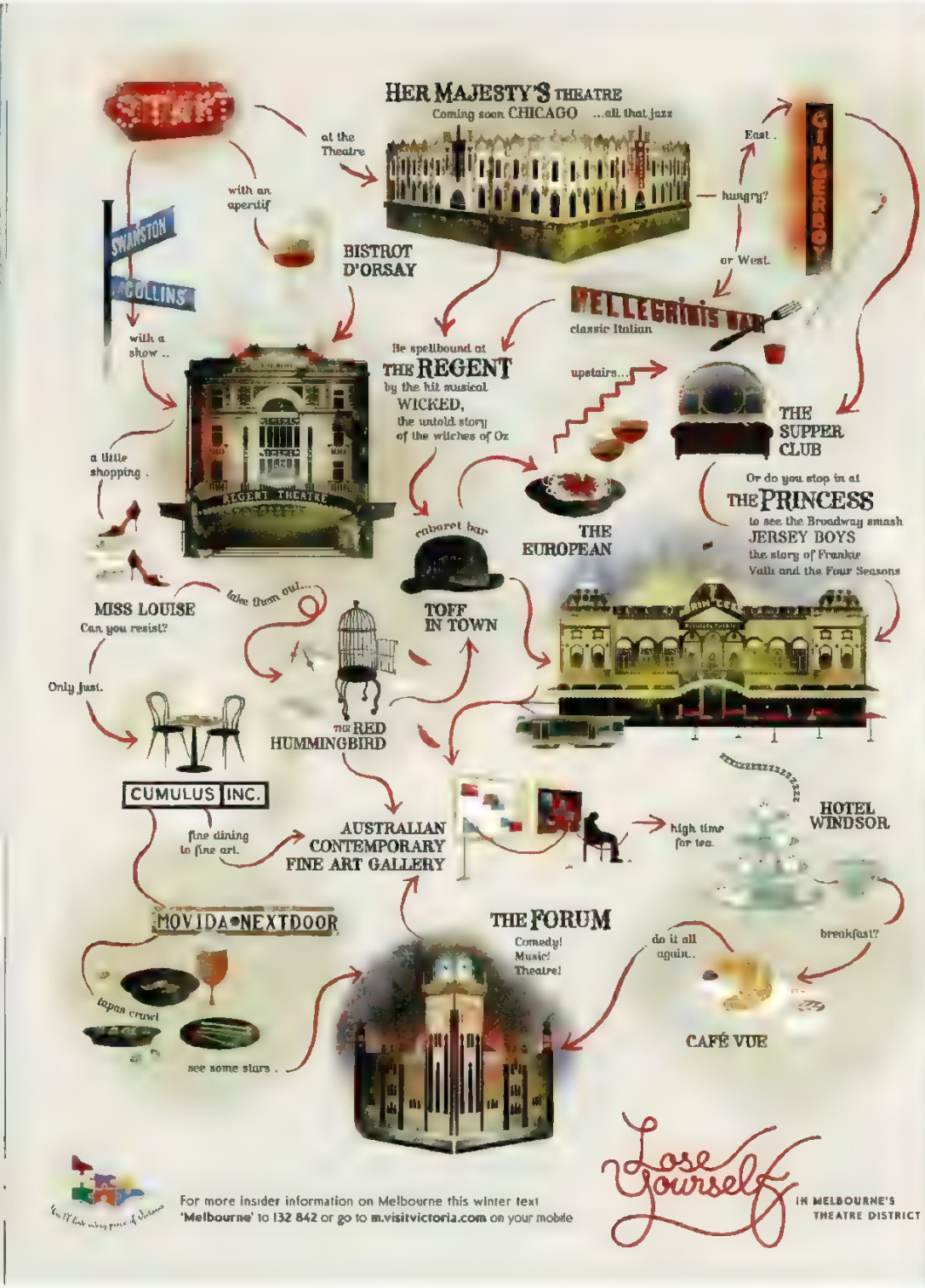
We know he's a star of the English Premiership these days, but Australian players got a sneak peak of Robbie Keane's magic a decade ago.

In 1999, the Young Socceroos had qualified for the FIFA World Youth Cup in Nigeria. It was a strong squad that featured Mile Sterjovski, Joel Griffiths, Jason Culina, Vince Grella and Mark Bresciano. After defeating the Saudis and losing to Mexico, the young Aussies came up against the Irish in their final group game. It was a golden generation of Irish talent featuring Keane, Stephen McPhail, Colin Healy and wing wizard Damien Duff. They tore the Aussies apart 4-0.

Since then the exciting striker, now 28, has enjoyed great success at Leeds and Spurs after a spell at Inter Milan at the start of the millennium.

Keane captains Eire and has scored over 35 goals in almost 90 appearances for his country.

Ireland v Australia Thomond Park, Limerick, Aug 12



QUICK GUIDE TO SOUTH AFRICA

Eyes down for a need-to-know on the next FIFA World Cup...

Cities and stadiums

If you're heading to the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, you'll likely end up in one of these cities, regions or stadiums.

Johannesburg
Johannesburg will have two stadiums and also boasts the opening match, one semi final and the final. The stadiums are Soccer City with a capacity of 94,700, and Ellis Park with a 60,000 limit.

Cape Town
The new Green Point Stadium boasts a backdrop of the ocean and mountains. Looking at the designs, this environmentally-friendly venue rather looks like a large wicker basket!

Durban
Apparently, the revamped Senzangakhona Stadium in KwaZulu-Natal will feature two large archways arcing 100 metres above the stadium roof. Capacity is 70,000.

Free State Province
The Free State Stadium in Bloemfontein, which holds almost 50,000 fans, has been ear-marked for first and second round matches.

Port Elizabeth
Set on the shores of the North End Lake, this is another stadium with a futuristic design.

Nelspruit
Nelspruit is in the far north-east of the country. The Mbombela Stadium should open this month, organisers say.

Polokwane
The Peter Mokaba Stadium is situated in Polokwane (Pietersburg), the capital of Limpopo. It currently serves as a football stadium and an international athletics venue.

Rustenburg
The 40,000 capacity Royal Bafokeng Sports Palace is expected to host first and second round games.

Pretoria
In Tshwane (Pretoria), the Loftus Versfeld stadium is the home ground of South African league champions Mamelodi Sundowns. Capacity will be around 50,000. ■

- South Africa is neighboured by Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique to the north and Swaziland in the east
- There are 11 recognised official languages but English is used in road signs, hotels, commerce, banking, government and official documents
- The country is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (UTC +2)
- South Africa has three capitals. Cape Town (legislative), Pretoria (administrative) and Bloemfontein (judicial)
- Football is colloquially referred to as 'diski'
- The currency is called the Rand
- Their national team are referred to as "Bafana Bafana". They also have some of the most fanatical fans in the world

Want to go to South Africa for the 2010 FIFA World Cup?
Check the Football Federation Australia (FFA) website for official FIFA-sanctioned tour operators and ticketing information. Click on the "Australia" button then "ticketing and travel" for more info at www.footballaustralia.com.au

SHOOT SCORE

Test your friends or quietly exercise your grey matter. No prizes, just a bit of fun.

1. Against which nation and in what year did Victory striker Danny Allsopp make his Socceroo debut?
2. What was the result the last time the Socceroos played at the MCG?
3. Who did they play that night?
4. Against which nation and in what year did Victory defender Rodrigo Vargas make his full Socceroo debut?
5. How many times did Kevin Muscat play for the Socceroos?
6. How many goals did the Victory skipper score for his nation at senior level?
7. What was the score the last time Japan and Australia met?
8. Where was Socceroo Josh Kennedy born?
9. Which club did Japanese star Shunsuke Nakamura play for last season?
10. True or false: Socceroo striker Mark Viduka once played for Celtic?
11. How old is Socceroo striker Scott McDonald?
12. Who scored the winning goal in the 2009 A-League Grand Final?
13. Name the two A-League clubs which will compete in the 2010 AFC Champions League?
14. Name Socceroo midfielder Vince Grella's English Premiership club?
15. Who scored for the Socceroos against Uzbekistan in the FIFA World Cup qualifier on 1 April this year?

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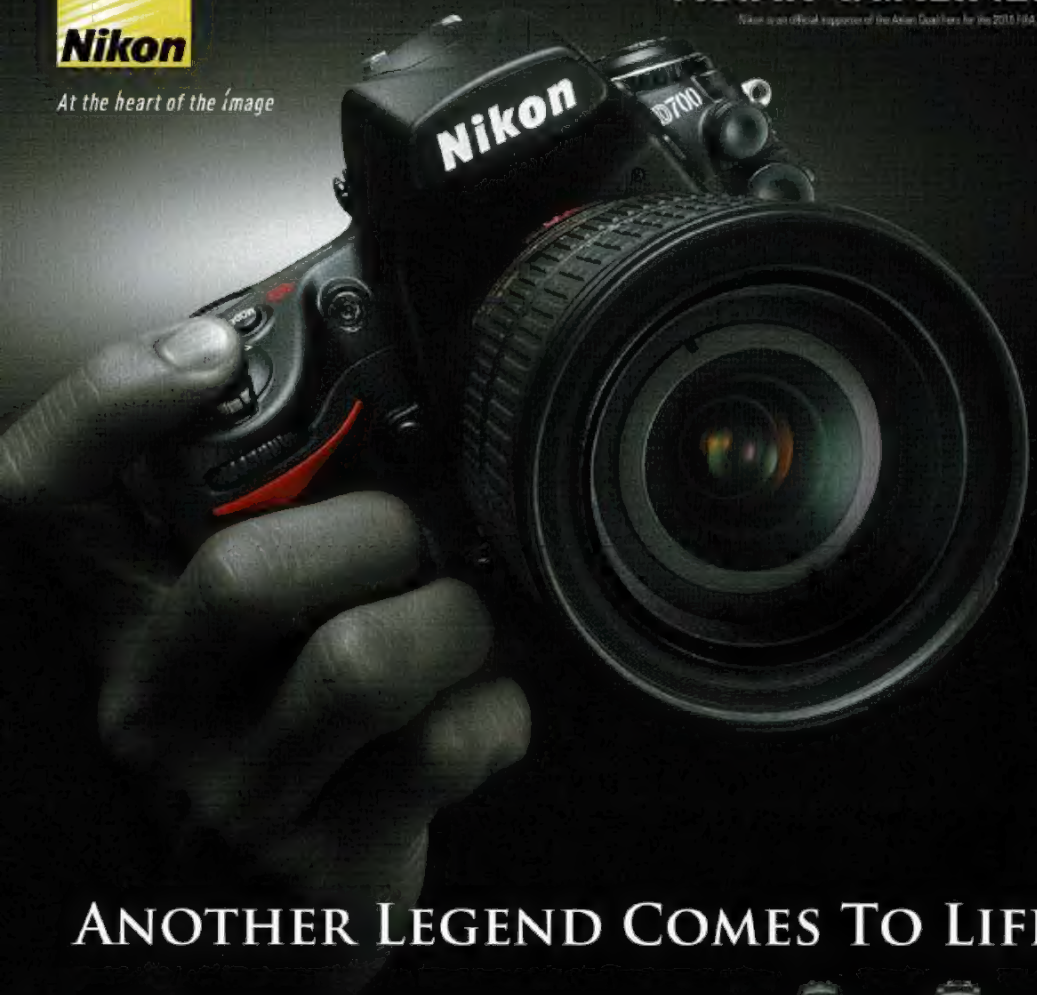

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SOCCEROO THROUGH AND THROUGH...

Amelia Roth

Her story of obsession for our Socceroos

Occupation Hospitality POS Consultant
Socceroo fan since Ever since I can remember!

What was the first Socceroo match you went to? Can you describe how you felt?
It was Australia v World Stars at the opening of Stadium Australia in 1998. My dad and I flew to Sydney, went straight to the game then went back to the airport and flew home to Melbourne immediately after. I grew up in a family where my dad and uncle played, watched and talked about football. So to finally go to a game to watch the boys was amazing. I thought I was a Socceroos fan before that game, but after that first match I was even more hooked.

> "After that first match in 1998, I was even more hooked"

What is your greatest Socceroo moment?
There is always the night we qualified for Germany, that goal, that moment! But being in Germany in Stuttgart and feeling the tension in the stadium when the final whistle went and we were through to the next round was pretty special. And the boys coming out to sing with the Aussie supporters afterwards was unforgettable.

Amelia (right) has golden memories of Germany 2006

Could you tell us about your Germany 2006 memories?
The first two memories that jump out at me are: Australia v Japan - 75 minutes gone and we are 1-0 down and I'm looking at my Aunty who is sitting next to me looking as sick as I felt, thinking we can't lose this game! Then watching Guus [Hiddink] signal Timmy to get ready to go on. Being in K-Town watching us score, equalise and win was indescribable! Second is Australia v Croatia - watching my dad torment the biggest Croatian man I have ever seen!

Favourite Socceroo and why?
Mark Bresciano. Maybe because he's a Melbourne boy. And because he's a brilliant player who's always there to represent his country!

In Yokohama last February for the FIFA World Cup qualifier

If we've qualified for the FIFA World Cup in 2010, will you be going?
Already booked! I will be going to watch the boys with the Green and Gold Army tour! Can't wait to be on tour again with my GG Army crew. I've been on the GG army Asian Cup Tour and The Tour of Kunming for the Socceroos v China qualifier. I wouldn't go to South Africa any other way!

How special will it be to have the MCG host the Socceroos against Japan tonight?
After seeing the Socceroos play Japan this year in Yokohama it's going to be great to see them here at home. And hopefully show them how you win a home match.

In a few words, describe your passion for our boys in green and gold.
I'm not sure you would call my love for the boys a passion. I think my family and friends would call it more of an obsession! ■

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The Socceroo was produced in conjunction with World Sport Group Pty Ltd by Haymarket Media Pty Ltd. (ABN 61 083 063 914), 52 Victoria Street, McMahons Point, NSW 2060.
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All the numbers you need to know about tonight's opponent Japan

127,078,679 Estimated population of Japan

1921 The year the Japanese football association was formed

202 The number of career goals scored by Japanese football legend Kamamoto Kunishige

1 Year of Japan's first competitive club match between teams from Kobe and Yokohama

888

79,985 Number of current registered footballers in the Tokyo prefecture

18 Number of teams in each of the two J-Leagues (J1 and J2)

5 Number of FIFA World Cups Japan have qualified for before the South Africa 2010 campaign

1993 Year the J-League was formed

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